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## THE WAR NOVELS OF ARNOLD ZWEIG

OF all events which have influenced the literature of our time, none is as important as the war of 1914-1918. The effect of the war was immediate and lasting. It determined the outlook of a whole generation of writers and left untouched hardly a single serious writer of fiction. Yet remarkably few novels about the war itself are memorable, and of these only a handful can be regarded as works of primary rank. One such work is the series of novels with which Arnold Zweig has been occupied for nearly two decades. The nucleus of his work was a play *The Case of Sergeant Grischa*, which remained in manuscript, for in 1920 no producer in Germany dared to stage it. When the novel of the same title was published in 1927, Zweig had already conceived of a larger plan, A TRILOGY OF THE TRANSITION, of which SERGEANT GRISCHA was to comprise one section, but the trilogy has since proved to be inadequate to meet the demands of the subject. THE CASE OF SERGEANT GRISCHA was followed by YOUNG

WOMAN OF 1914, EDUCATION BEFORE VERDUN, and THE CROWNING OF A KING, and three more volumes are promised, *In eine bessere Zeit*, *Aufmarsch der Jugend*, and *Wahrheit und Lüge*.

On the basis of subject matter alone it is not inaccurate to label the completed volumes "war novels". THE CASE OF SERGEANT GRISCHA, the most widely known of them, is often bracketed with other notable war books, A FAREWELL TO ARMS, THREE SOLDIERS, ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT, among others. But the purpose of Zweig's work was not evident when the first volume appeared, and since the series is not known by a general title, critics and readers have sometimes considered the volumes as independent novels. So to consider them, of course, is to miss the significance of the parts as well as of the whole. Although the structure is not yet complete, its outlines are visible from what has been accomplished, and already it appears to dwarf most books about the war, not merely in bulk, but in substance and penetration.

For the most part, authors of war novels viewed the war as an eccentric shift in the normal course of human events. Their attitude is summarized in Siegfried Sassoon's statement in SHERSTON'S PROGRESS, "I had no conviction about anything except that the war was a dirty trick which had been played on my generation." The leading motive of A FAREWELL TO ARMS is the effort of two young people to retrieve from a chaotic world the opportunities for normal existence; they make no attempt to come to grips with their environment. The war as an objective, historic event is little more than the backdrop against which Lieutenant Henry and Katherine enact a private, domestic drama. Since the reactions of Hemingway's hero and heroine are typical of the behavior of average individuals plunged into cataclysmic happenings, his story is moving and effective; but its point of view is too personal and intimate to provide more than a superficial account of the historic event itself.

A FAREWELL TO ARMS represents an extreme instance of the war novel in which the perspective of the war is limited to its effect upon a small group of individuals. Zweig, however, is concerned with its effect upon an entire nation. I can call to mind only one work of fiction which approaches Zweig's in scope and massiveness, WAR AND PEACE. In that book Tolstoi sets out to

convey the panoramic sweep of history during an entire generation, and to fuse the material of the large objective event with that of a fictive, subjective story. But as Percy Lubbock has so beautifully demonstrated, the fusion is never wholly realized, the cleavage never effectively bridged between the "drama of a great historic collision" and the enchanting tale of aristocratic Russian society. In Zweig's work no such dichotomy exists, because he does not depict experience as functioning on two planes—individual and collective, but subsumes individual experience in the collective. The integration of subjective and objective points of view is the chief distinction of the work considered as a study of historic circumstance. But Zweig ventures more than the setting down of events; he attempts by analysis to discover the forces operating upon events, and, finally, to interpret their significance in terms of human experience.

The conditions of so ambitious a project—to recreate in fiction a whole phase of the life of a nation—is attended with dangers. In order to achieve thorough documentation and a spacious effect, the writer must be willing to sacrifice the rewards of compression and neat design, which are tension and swiftness of narrative. He also runs the risk of discursiveness and lays himself open to the charge of pedantry. These are charges which have been brought against Zweig. But meticulous detail and authentic documentation are not in themselves evidence of sterility, especially when they have been invested with vitality by the metamorphic power of imagination. Like his master Tolstoi, Zweig has an inexhaustible interest in the sensuous; most of the personalities, incidents, and objects in his novels bear the impress of actuality.

His work is therefore redeemed from the tediousness which often besets novels of abnormal length by its brilliant realistic surface. The realism is fortified by a pronounced autobiographical tendency; for the career of Werner Bertin, a young law student, novelist, and playwright, corresponds too closely to that of the author, who himself served three years in a labor battalion in Lille, Serbia, Macedonia, and Verdun, and a year at Army headquarters in Kovno and Vilna, to conceal the autobiographical intent. The sense of personal adventure which lends charm and force to the war narratives of Hemingway and Remarque is not wanting in Zweig's books. Nor are the other features of popular

war fiction lacking—the love story, the drama of personal heroism, the pageantry of armed forces, the excitement of battle. These elements contribute to the interest and readability of the work; nevertheless, they are only incidental to its more serious intentions. It is significant that, with the exception of *EDUCATION BEFORE VERDUN*, most of the action of the story takes place in areas comparatively remote from combat zones. The reason is not that Zweig is squeamish about the depiction of horror and suffering, but rather that he does not regard physical combat as the crux of the war.

To determine the nature of that war and to submit it to searching analysis are the objectives of Zweig's study. His task involves the transmutation of what is actually an encyclopedic survey of a huge mass of historic material into a narrative possessing form and direction. In view of these aims the term *war novel* obviously fails to denote the compass of the work. The author himself refers to it as "an historical novel in more than one sense", which intimates its supplementary qualities of social document and philosophical commentary.

In Zweig's account, Germany during the war is seen as an immense stratification composed of a great number of modes of human activity, seemingly disparate, but actually forming a solid mass. The composition of the work is governed by this conception. As the story unfolds, layer after layer is piled on with cumulative effect until the whole structure is disclosed in its unity. The military conduct of the war bulks large in the structure and is submitted to exhaustive examination by one whose knowledge of military technics is equalled by perhaps only one other novelist of our time, Jules Romains. Much of Zweig's information may have been derived from observation, but his erudition on matters of strategy, administration, organization, and his detailed and accurate descriptions of such matters as communications, transportation, supplies, intelligence, the hierarchy of staffs, and the internal politics of the army, bear witness to indefatigable research. One field of military activity, the process of army law and the court martial, has a special fascination for the author. This subject, as we shall discover, has a vital bearing on the development of the theme of the work.

Zweig does not assign supreme importance to the strictly mil-

itary level in his analysis. Beyond the military sphere, though inextricably linked with it, is the political. Here is the real source of power, the spirit which animates that vast organism which is the army. The scene of the novel shifts constantly back and forth between the battle-front, staff headquarters, the Reichstag, the conference table at Brest-Litovsk, committee rooms in neutral Switzerland, even as far as Imperial Headquarters in Spa. One is struck by the author's grasp of such widely variegated topics as international politics, the real and the announced war aims of the Reich, its geographic ambitions, the tension between the Reichstag and the Supreme Army Command, the conflicts within the Entente, and the friction and jealousies of the various national groups which constituted Germany. The fury of political contention, with all its indifference to human values and individual rights, dominates the scene in *THE CROWNING OF A KING*, which deals with the three-cornered rivalry of the Supreme Command, the Eastern Army, and the liberal faction in the Reichstag for the throne of occupied Lithuania. Nowhere else do we get so undisguised a statement of the imminent fate of a conquered nation.

*THE CROWNING OF A KING* extends the analysis of the war to the economic sphere. The real motives of will to power, dynastic ambitions, and political machinations are betrayed by the schemes of the conquerors for the spoliation of the country. The military governor of the area recoups his fortune to the tune of millions, every general has secretly sliced off a sizable estate for himself, the lesser officers covet soft positions in the civilian administration which is to follow. One mind controls the destiny of the region, extending from the Baltic to the Carpathians, and known by its military name *Ober Ost*. The figure of Albert Schieffen-zahn, the real brain of the Eastern Campaign, is one of the most brilliantly executed portraits in the work, and it is significant that the General is depicted, not as a soldier, but as a financial wizard and executive genius.

Zweig is too astute a scholar to assign the whole responsibility for the war to the financiers and munitions kings. As a matter of fact, he does not fail to point out the fundamental hostility which exists between the army and those gentlemen, the duplicity and mistrust which lurks beneath their collaboration. But in

the end that collaboration is the important thing. Schieffenzahn, the general, and Schilles, the international munitions magnate, are indispensable to each other, although each conceives the other as a mere tool in his designs. The economic picture, however, is not exclusively devoted to such matters. The whole scale is drawn, from the conference between general and munitions maker to the women and children who forage in the woods for acorns and berries at the behest of their government. Most interesting of the volumes in the treatment of economic motifs is *YOUNG WOMAN OF 1914*, which examines the effect of the outbreak of the war upon civilian, and especially middle-class, Germany.

From the range of topics discussed in these books, it might be assumed that the author is occupied with abstract matters to a degree not ordinarily encountered in fiction. Yet despite the extraordinary amount of intellection, the work does not betray the characteristics of a treatise. Theoretical digressions do not impair the flow of narrative because the author does not indulge in the luxury of speaking in his own person. Ideas are never divorced from personality; abstract questions are aired by characters active in the story and issue naturally from states of mind conditioned by the immediate situation. Even the large battle-pieces of *EDUCATION BEFORE VERDUN* do not issue from an hypothetical observer situated on an Olympian eminence, but emerge gradually as complex patchworks embodying the views and experiences of numerous participants. This narrative procedure which frames every facet of the story in an individual consciousness endows the work with a profoundly human quality.

The novel is densely populated. Hundreds of persons cross the reader's field of vision, each distinctly conceived and differentiated, each consciousness radiating its own current of ideas and contributing to that subtle network which constitutes the intellectual life of the nation. The range of personality gives the effect of a cross-section of all mentalities involved in the war, from the most insignificant cab-driver in Vilna to the Crown Prince. Method governs the selection; the work is peopled with representatives of the main classes of German society and the principal occupations of modern man. The sampling is extremely broad. The characters are drawn from intellectuals, artists, educators, journalists, civil servants, bankers, skilled artisans, petty bourge-

oisie, peasantry, proletariat, landed aristocracy, and nobility. The survey of ethnographic and national divisions is not less comprehensive, embracing the whole of German and Austro-Hungarian territory and the conquered regions.

The author of *LE DÉBACLE* would undoubtedly have admired Zweig's sociological approach and his grasp of occupational and social categories; the German author, however, is firmly rooted in a literary heritage the aims of which far transcend those of naturalism. Zweig does not discount the value of historical research and sociological analysis in fiction, but for him they do not exhaust the potentialities of imaginative literature. Stripping from his work its historic sense, its investigation of the phenomena of war, its superb characterization—in short, its entire narrative fabric—we are left with a forceful ethical and philosophic document.

## II

If the subject of the work is the war, its theme is justice. This fact is most immediately apparent in *THE CASE OF SERGEANT GRISCHA*, in which the story as a whole attains its emotional climax.<sup>1</sup> In this skillfully contrived novel, the destiny of one individual is shown to be inseparably linked with that of a whole nation. Grischa Propotkin, a private in the Russian army, escapes from a German prison camp and sets out across country for his home. His escape is effected partially by means of a borrowed German uniform which, unknown to Grischa, was formerly in the possession of a spy, and which proves to be his undoing. He is captured somewhere in Lithuania and sentenced to death as a spy. He has no difficulty in establishing his real identity and soon, because of his simple unaffected charm, enlists in his cause many of the enemy, including Bertin, an orderly in the court martial, Posnanski, judge advocate of the court, and Winfried, aide-de-camp to the general of an Eastern army group. The local court clears Grischa of the spy charge and forwards his dossier to Headquarters which counters by insisting that the original sentence be carried out as a disciplinary measure. At this point the drama reaches its full orbit. The issue has been drawn; the

<sup>1</sup>Although *GRISCHA* was written and published first, it is actually to be the fifth volume in the complete series.

protagonists have chosen sides. No longer are the adversaries an individual and a system, but ways of life diametrically opposed; one weighs human life in terms of military expediency; the other, even in wartime, cherishes it as something beyond price.

THE CASE OF SERGEANT GRISCHA is of a piece with the thought of the foremost contemporary German writers; Wassermann, Döblin, Feuchtwanger, Werfel are all obsessed with the idea of justice. Zweig's treatment of the "case" must therefore be considered as more than a dramatic device whereby a philosophical text is implemented by narrative suspense and emotional force. The idea of justice is integral in the *modus operandi* of the book; SERGEANT GRISCHA is not a plea for the life of one man, but a study of moral corruption whose roots reach down into the foundations of national life.

The theme of justice is developed in each of the other volumes. It bears upon Bertin's abandonment of his sweetheart in YOUNG WOMAN OF 1914 and Winfried's treatment at the hands of his fellow officers in THE CROWNING OF A KING. It is also generally involved in the whole question of minority rights in the latter book. But EDUCATION BEFORE VERDUN, which deals with an instance of extra-legal justice, is perhaps most instructive of the writer's ethical preoccupation. Christoph Kroysing, a young officer charged with insubordination, is deliberately exposed to death by his superior officers in order that he may not plead his case in a military court. The victim's older brother, Eberhardt Kroysing, a lieutenant in a sapper regiment, informed of this infamy, dedicates himself to clearing his brother's name and invoking justice upon the offenders. When it becomes evident that the latter, Captain Jansch and Major Niggle, have successfully evaded formal inquiry, he resorts to the primitive code of honor and embarks upon a private vendetta. At this point the "education" of Lieutenant Kroysing is initiated. The case is lifted out of its legal framework and becomes a matter for the individual conscience. Whereas Grischa is a mere pawn in a Brobdingnagian game, Kroysing, within certain limits, is a free agent. The distinction between the Propotkin and Kroysing incidents indicates what is perhaps the master motive of the work, which is something more than an affirmation of the validity of certain traditional concepts of Western culture such as the idea of justice; it is, rather, a sum-

mons to both individuals and groups to execute their obligations *vis à vis* those concepts.

### III

Zweig is much concerned with the notion of the interdependence of individual and collective conduct. A description of the latter, however, must be achieved by means which are congenial to the art of fiction; it ought not to be reduced to the level of theory. The writer therefore depicts social modes of action and thought by creating characters whose significance is projected beyond a private world. In other words, he endows his characters with typical, or even symbolic meaning. Hence, an inspection of the method or methods whereby the writer displays personality is indispensable to an understanding of his aims. The title of one of the volumes, *EDUCATION BEFORE VERDUN*, provides a clue. The story of Lieutenant Kroysing is only one instance in the series of characters developing along the lines of an education. As a matter of fact, the handling of personality in these books is largely governed by the conception of the war as an educative process.

The major figures may be divided according to two categories—those whose fundamental make-up is undisturbed by the events which surround them, and those whose orientation is being constantly shifted by the pressure of the outer world. The immutability of those in the first group is founded upon adherence to traditional values or to closed systems of thought and conduct. Of the traditionalists, Posnanski, the middle-aged lawyer, is most sympathetically portrayed, and he may very well be the spokesman of Zweig's maturity, as Bertin is a portrait of the author as a young man. Posnanski never suffers the anguish of disillusionment, because from the beginning he is clear-eyed and undeceived concerning the motives and consequences of the war. A profound student of the law and a man of intellect, he finds the sources of satisfaction in things of the intellect—history, literature, music. But his poise is derived from his awareness of the traditional character of culture. Hence his devotion to his profession and his meticulous performance of religious disciplines, although he is not, strictly speaking, a "believer".

In sharp contrast with Posnanski is Mertens, the jurist involved in the Kroysing affair. He also is a product of the finest elements

of German culture, but it is his misfortune to have been reared in the library of a famous father, sheltered from gross human intercourse. Psychologically incapable of witnessing the spectacle of war, which is identified in his mind with the essential coarseness of man, Mertens, the aesthete, takes his life.

That the bases of mental and moral stability are not exclusively intellectual is illustrated by the figure of Markus Wahl, the founder of a banking house in Berlin and grandfather of the "young woman of 1914", Lenore Wahl. The old man's wisdom stems from innate racial experience which, despite the hyper-Prussianism of his son and the thorough Germanizing of the rest of his family, informs him that the Jewish merchant has no stake in this war, and from a shrewd mercantile pragmatism which regards war in general as unsound business for a banker.

Most carefully delineated of the older men is von Lychow, a full-fledged general and a Junker of ancient lineage. An impeccable example of the Prussian officer, he embodies the best elements of aristocracy, conservatism, and order. Idolized by his men, he is despised by the generals of the Supreme Command as a sentimental dotard, but he maintains his power and position by virtue of his integrity. Lychow is one of the few members of the military caste sympathetically portrayed by the author. He wins the admiration of the reader also, because it is he who carries the fight for Grischa's life to its final arbiter, Schieffenzahn. The interview which takes place between them is one of the most stirring scenes in the entire story, and in Lychow's pleading are revealed the forces which make for his integrity—his recognition of the responsibilities of the ruling classes, and his religion, which has instilled in him the doctrine that the state is a vessel of God, and that justice and faith in God have always been the pillars of the Prussian state.

A whole wing in the gallery is devoted to the extremist element of the army. Needless to say, its members belong to a category of static characters, and their unregenerate inflexibility in the face of reality is the cause of their ultimate downfall. Heading the list is Schieffenzahn, the idol of the Pan-Germans, surrounded by his sycophants at Headquarters and throughout the army—Wilhelmji, head of his court martial, Colonel Mutius, head of the Intelligence, Major Buchenegger, Forest Administrator of

Lithuania, Captain Siewindt of the Vilna military police, Major Brettschneider, in command of the garrison at Mervinsk, and not least among a host of others, the villains of *EDUCATION BEFORE VERDUN*.

There is no self-pity and little hate in these books, but the denunciation of Prussianism has the impact of tremendous moral indignation. In these portraits, Zweig brings into play all the resources of diabolic irony, which strike harder than mere invective. For the writer, these men are not stock villains, but creatures essentially human, betrayed by common weakness—pride, greed, sadistic love of power, flattery of the great. Pettiness governs their conduct as much as pure malice. The contempt which Jules Romains showers upon the heads of the French war regime in *VERDUN* is anticipated in Zweig's judgment of its German counterpart.

The war had reached its peak; all the omens, hitherto favorable to the Germans, were imperceptibly reversed. For a nation so recently welded into a state, the Germans did wonders. With his left arm the Teutonic giant held off the Russian, already bleeding with a thousand wounds; with his right, he struck at the two sternest warriors of the last century, the British, before whom Napoleon went down, and the French, who under that same Napoleon had been the terror of the armies of their day. His right foot had crushed the warlike race of the Serbs into apparent impotence, with his left he had kicked the Rumanians out of action. The masses went their way in patience, the ruling class in utter unconcern; to the German race, the terror of the Romans in the Teutoberg forest, belonged, so they believed, the future, which they were now forcibly transforming into the present. Hardly a dozen men on earth knew that this giant carried a feeble brain beneath his iron helmet, incapable of grasping the present, and that, as always happened in the fairy-tale, he was so greedy that he let go what was within his reach for the sake of the tremendous treasure that he wanted to stuff in his sack and carry away with him. [*EDUCATION BEFORE VERDUN*, p. 217]

Scattered throughout the work are satiric glimpses into the opium-dreams of the Pan-Germans, which concealed a far greater danger than was usually recognized by a tolerant, easy-going world. Pan-Germanism is here shown to be the outgrowth of

an insidious power, professional militarism. Not a few of the military caste figured themselves as a race of Olympians, happy and secure in their positions, prospering from a war which had opened new vistas, undreamed of potentialities of personal comfort and aggrandizement, and which, they secretly hoped, would never end.

Zweig's animus, however, is not directed upon individuals, but upon the system which permitted such individuals to flourish, a system whose corruption finally opens the eyes of a splendid young officer, Paul Winfried, even though he is bound to the system by the strongest ties of blood and breeding.

The horrible thing was that beneath the ordered German reality, this Service world with its stern notions of legality and Prussian soldierly tradition, there was an underworld of lawlessness, brutality, deliberate exploitation of the weak, full of contemptuous violence, that made mock of the defenceless and looked with gusto on . . . helplessness. That was the aspect that the occupying power presented from beneath, from a place where public supervision and control did not exist. And it seemed to him just as evil that a minority of knaves and brutes could carry on such a regime while the majority of decent people dared make no other protest than ignore what they saw. Mighty personages held a protecting hand over these ruffians . . . a whole party or group of those who made a good thing out of the war and degraded it into a marauding expedition. [THE CROWNING OF A KING, p. 473]

Winfried brings us to the second category of Zweig's *dramatis personae*, those whose grasp of reality is achieved only at the cost of a painful and lengthy exposure to the uglier facts of the war. It cannot escape us that of all the figures in the books, Bertin, at first, and then Winfried, make the greatest claim upon the author's interest and imagination. If anything, the "education" of Winfried is more arduous than Bertin's, for the former labors under certain handicaps. Like Bertin, he is an intellectual, a product of the universities; but he does not have Bertin's advantage, a dubious one, to be sure, of being a Jew, a member of a race which was never wholly welcomed into the body of the nation, and which from the outset held certain reservations concerning the objectives of the Prussians. Furthermore, Winfried is an officer, a member

of a highly privileged group, and *aide-de-camp* to an influential uncle, von Lycho, whereas Bertin is a private, not in active service, but in the labor corps, probably the lowest of ranks in the entire hierarchy.

Winfried's story is the more dramatic, his dilemma the more compelling, since the alternatives he confronts possess greater polarity than those Bertin faces. Winfried's experience may be viewed as an allegory in which the forces of good and the forces of evil battle for possession of his soul. His allegiance is claimed by two parties. The army, represented by the Prussians, exerts a tremendous pull through his inbred devotion to the Service. Nor is he less swayed by genuine admiration of the efficiency of the military machine, which furthermore contains truly superior minds. But more powerful than any of these influences is the spell cast upon him by a Major General Clauss, chief of operations of Ober-Ost (according to the author, an actual portrait of General Rudolph Clauss), who is depicted as the greatest soldier among the Germans, a man of profound sagacity and brilliant intuition, and furthermore, one who had nothing but contempt for the intrigue of the smug "parlor generals" at headquarters.

It seemed as though a waft of power came forth from him; the voice, the eyes, the whole imperious nature of the man radiated power. The impact of that character quite carried Winfried away. What did it signify if this man thought otherwise and felt otherwise than he in matters of detail? Nothing at all. It was wonderful just to be in his company, to look at him and breathe the same air. [THE CROWNING OF A KING, p. 144]

In the opposing camp is Winfried's heritage (He is only half Lychow, his mother having married a middle-class surgeon in defiance of her aristocratic family), all of his friends who fought on behalf of Grischa, including Posnanski and Bertin, and most important, his fiancée, a nurse in the Antakol field hospital.

For three days Winfried stayed in his fiancée's house, and he became acquainted with what he had never known, an independent, intelligent middle class, proud of its inheritance, and full of suppressed wrath against the imperilling of the scrap of political freedom which the German people had preserved or wrested from the craft or brutality of the ruling classes in Prussia. Professor Osann crashed his fist onto

the table; in the Tübingen institution, certain young men had studied, and their names were Hölderlin and Möricke and Hegel and Schelling. . . . His tunic seemed to dissolve under the piercing eyes of Professor Osann . . . and a young man sat before them in his middle twenties, who had yet to learn all that was of importance in human life. [THE CROWNING OF A KING, p. 28]

Still, observation, intelligence, and familiarity with minds like Posnanski's do not succeed in lifting the veil from the young man's eyes. Not before he suffers a shock the severity of which threatens his very sanity, is he ready to repudiate his class and throw in his lot with the ranks of common humanity.

In one respect Bertin is the most interesting character in the work because he is so ostensibly a self-portrait. But, like Hans Castorp in *THE MAGIC MOUNTAIN*, he is a neutral figure and somewhat colorless from the dramatic point of view. That is probably why he is relegated to a secondary rôle as the story progresses. Bertin's education is less drastic than Winfried's. Primarily an observer and intermediary in all but the first volume, Bertin is educated with less catastrophic consequences. The process of enlightenment for him is a gradual one, operating by analysis, introspection, and a series of startling revelations, but by no shock which affects him morally. Bertin's story is a record of the tragedy which befell the intellectual classes in Germany during the war, a tragedy wholly undeserved, for almost to a man they dedicated themselves to the Prussian adventure, although at the time they believed it to be something else.

Werner Bertin, when the call of destiny came upon him, was twenty-six years old . . . Behind him lay a penurious youth . . . he had gradually gained confidence in his abilities, and had developed them by eager and laborious effort; he had studied law, philosophy, modern languages, and after his first bar examination he went further and began to write short stories, a novel, and dramas. He fancied he saw himself as he really was, and viewed his character with a trained and critical eye; in reality, he knew but scanty fragments of himself.

This is the young man who receives his calling-up order with an almost pathetic light-heartedness.

To the military authorities he was merely a recruit, not quite fit for active service; the fact that he was a writer only served to make him ridiculous. And yet—he became conscious of a throbbing at his heart. These same authorities were insignificant in themselves; but behind them stood home and usage, all the forces of the soul, all the good spirits of the Fatherland. Rough hands, indeed, had seized him, brutal and bloody was the task to which they would put him—no matter. War was in the world, and war prevailed. A man must now be equal to all claims, with nerves more sensitive, emotions keener, and spirit more alert. Now Germany was calling, and he must be prompt to answer.

These were the views of one who had soaked up a good deal of the best of German thought and art, who, together with a large section of the youth of the nation, believed that the war was destined to effect a glorious solution, and that it bore promise of a better, happier world. They were fond of quoting Schiller's axiom "that through aesthetics lies the way to the solution of every political problem, that through beauty one moves on to freedom", and for all of them these truths were merely postponed for a while until the bugles blew for peace.

It takes nearly four years before Berlin is thoroughly purged of his innocence of mind, years during which he is subjected to degrading tasks, privation, the humiliations of orderly-room politics, the contempt of petty officers. Insofar as Bertin is an autobiographical figure, to trace the steps in his disillusionment would require the retelling of a large part of the whole story, for, although not omnipresent, he plays an important rôle in two major incidents, the Kroysing and Propotkin affairs, and one assumes that he is somehow aware, if only remotely, of all other critical events in the story. Zweig, however, by no means identifies himself completely with Bertin. He exists above him, and views him with ironic detachment. At the end of *EDUCATION BEFORE VERDUN*, we get a glimpse of Bertin as he is after the Armistice, a sadder and wiser man, indeed, but not wise enough. Perhaps his failing springs from his trusting nature, perhaps from the characteristic myopia of the intellectual. At any rate, he greets the signing of the Treaty of Versailles with enthusiasm, and looks upon the founding of the Republic as a promise of the rebirth of German

ideals. The irony of this passage can be better appreciated perhaps, if we recall that it was written not long before 1937.

Of the two broad classes of characters represented in the work, those in the "static" category do not demonstrate any marked development. That is, they tend to perceive certain truths without the mediation of instruction, or to be functionally incapable of grasping them. The "dynamic" characters arrive at the recognition of those truths only after an arduous schooling. The work of fiction which conforms to the pattern of an education belongs to an established literary genre, the *Erziehungströman*. In its rudimentary form, it posits an education, the aim of which is to mold the personality of a pupil along lines determined by an educator. The tale is complete when the subject conforms to the moral or social ideas which the teacher has striven to inculcate. This is roughly the design of Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. A much more complex expression of the pedagogical novel is Thomas Mann's *THE MAGIC MOUNTAIN*, in which the pupil is exposed to a variety of pedagogical influences but, acquiescing to no single one of them, steers a middle course. The task of fitting Zweig's work into this form is none too easy, for the instructional medium is not an individual or individuals, but an environment. Furthermore, the lesson learned by the pupils is neither an explicit doctrine, nor a system of dialectic.

#### IV

It may be a mistake to search for doctrine in Zweig's work, which professes only to be an account of historical events narrated in terms of the cumulative experience of a great number of individuals. Despite the freight of ideas which it bears, it does not provide its own gloss or commentary, and whatever theory it contains is residual rather than central. Nevertheless, the speculative tendencies of the work are too provocative to be ignored. One should not expect, however, to discover in it an unequivocal expression of the author's creed. Zweig is not an arbitrary thinker. A man of intense integrity and honesty, he is torn by the moral and emotional dilemmas which confront the philosophic mind. If his ideas are lacking in finality, it may be countered that it is not the function of the writer of fiction to supply a solution for

every problem he has posed. Nonetheless, if most of Zweig's judgments are suspended, his books do express a view of life, an ethics, and a social philosophy.

The education of two of the protagonists, Winfried and Bertin, leads to a denial of the uninquiring acceptance of ideas imposed from above by the lords and masters of society. On the face of it, this would indicate that the goal of their development is a revolutionary position. But whereas the influence seems to hold for Winfried, it does not for Bertin.

Much of the discussion in the novels centers around politics, but the author's own view is nowhere clearly articulated. Perhaps it can be arrived at inductively by analyzing the political attitudes of his characters. The communists in the persons of Wilhelm Pahl, the compositor, and Karl Lebede, the innkeeper, play no small part in Bertin's awakening, but do not succeed in bringing about a conversion. Winfried, who is politically unsophisticated throughout the story, at the end of *THE CROWNING OF A KING* is on the verge of a bolt to Russia, where the Revolution has already been established. But until we have more information about this event, it is not possible to make a definite deduction from his act. Many of the admirable figures in the books, probably a majority, are Social Democrats who were well satisfied with the type of government guaranteed by the Weimar constitution. Others, equally admirable, are confirmed conservatives who would gladly shed their blood for the preservation of government by a self-perpetuating, but preferably enlightened, ruling class.

Does the author then stand with the right, the left, or the middle? He appears to have been deeply influenced by Marxist thought in its approach to the interpretation of history, but his social and cultural antecedents probably prevent his accepting Marxism wholeheartedly. On the other hand, he is cynical of the gullibility of the Social Democrats, and distrustful of the motives of the aristocracy. Obviously, the work advances no specific program or platform; however, it does contain a positive social outlook, which emerges powerfully from the narrative of Sergeant Grischa. As his tale unfolds, the uncouth, lovable peasant acquires heroic stature; by the eve of his execution he has become a tragic figure—tragic because he finally perceives the symbolic

moment of his own life and death. His last hours on earth are a demonstration of the essential dignity of man. Grischa is the prototype of millions like him, who gave what was asked of them and more on the battlefields, without complaint and without bitterness. "These simple people," thinks Count Ankerstrom, the Swedish professor, who represents the Red Cross, "are everywhere the same. At home in Sweden, or over in Germany, or here in Russia . . . the same enduring stuff of which mankind is made . . . if only society would let these fellows come to the surface, what mighty figures would arise upon the earth."

The form of society which makes the greatest appeal of Zweig is one in which all the potential forces for good, however differentiated, would be employed in a collective constructive effort, just as dozens of persons drawn from all ranks of society, from the peasant girl Babka to Excellency von Lychow, join hands in the common cause for Grischa. No mechanistic conception of society could satisfy the humanistic and humanitarian leanings of the author. Without underrating the importance of economics in modern social organization, he nevertheless postulates the survival of civilization on the ethical orientation of the state. The problem of the modern world is to create a social organism governed by those moral principles which have been traditionally associated with individual conduct. One of these principles, if not the leading one, is the idea of justice. The very pivot of the work as an ethical and social document are the words spoken by Posnanski to a group of friends who have gathered to await the telephone message which is to decide a man's fate.

Whoever rises in the world, and has to act many parts, tramples on his own soul, and therefore sinks inwardly. Germany as a Power is rising like a batter pudding, Germany as a moral force is shrinking to the thinness of a thread . . . That's the way with States. . . . Not until the thread is broken, and injustice is recognized as a principle of government, do matters begin to look very black. There will always be people to intervene—even unimportant people like you and me; and if they take enough trouble they can leaven the whole lump well enough to make life possible. And if not—well, Germany is not indispensable. . . . Humanity clusters around the earth in little groups; if one of them goes into the shade and sleeps for a while another will jump into prominence. Nobody knows . . . why man sticks to this earth at all. Cer-

tainly not because he is primeval mud, like any other piece of organic life, but because he appears to be a switchboard for transferring the forces and purposes of the universe into terms of consciousness and practical reality. Flying, wireless, and submarines come much more easily to him than doing right for its own sake. Morality is not a pretty word, but still. . . . It must be our next task, I think, to try to make the nations feel that justice hangs over them in heaven among the stars, just as the individual feels it when he is not maddened or stupefied by the pursuit of money. [THE CASE OF SERGEANT GRISCHA, p. 311]

This speech of Posnanski's sets the emotional as well as the intellectual key of the work. The spectacle of multitudes betrayed by an invisible antagonist, of all the men of good will impotent to stem the forces of destruction evokes the author's pathos. But the books are too deeply infused with the spirit of irony and critical detachment to permit of clear-cut emotions. Zweig is concerned with the recording of a period of transition, a civilization in the throes of a moral crisis, and considerations of optimism or pessimism are not central to his object.

*by Keith Thomas*

## MIDDLE AUTUMN

The apples which no hand  
Possessed no longer cling;  
Their scent in amber air  
Has bidden gnats to sing

Preludes to frost and shrill  
Cadenzas of the storm,  
Weaving the dark and cold  
Through days now light and warm.

Wild geese in arrows plunge  
Across the hazy skies,  
Honking thier foolish horns,  
Tracing a way so wise.

Not migrant nor of mind  
For wisdom too complete,  
I watch the hollow smoke  
Along the hills, and greet

These prophecies with calm,  
And acquiesce in them  
What synthesis of green  
Turns brighter gem on gem.

*by Milton Rugoff*

## DOS PASSOS, NOVELIST OF OUR TIME

THERE are regional novelists like Faulkner of Mississippi, class novelists like Caldwell and his Southern poor whites, autobiographical novelists like Thomas Wolfe. John Dos Passos is like none of these. He is the spectator with a panoramic view. He is the recorder of the temper of our time, seeking to register the complete look and feel of our place. He is the novelist of the whole.

As such, his work has mirrored most sensitively the dominant streams of tendency, particularly among intellectuals, since the World War. The progress is of course not perfectly outlined or regular but neither is it too difficult to trace and chart. It embodies the development of a thoughtful artist who has tried to reproduce American life on as broad a scale as any novelist of our time. Thus his earliest books (considered not only for what they say explicitly but for what they reveal almost unwittingly) are in many ways representative of the temper and outlook of the post-war or "lost" generation, while his later volumes show the sprouting of the seed of social interest and its growth into a strongly libertarian, almost radical motif. His latest stage, although still not clear, appears to some critics to be a retreat from the last, to others merely a variant of it.

Despite the experimentalism and groping which mark the five or six books which Dos Passos had turned out by 1923, and despite their diversity, several very interesting patterns are already clear. Whether it be novel, play, or travel diary, there is one recurrent chord, a kind of spiritual constant—a sense of the rebellion of an individual against stifling institutions. In one form or another it is present in each of these books. It is the outcry of the esthete against a society not responsive to esthetes, the enmity of the liberated and creative personality against institutionalized life and straight-jacket traditions. Although such an attitude on

the part of the artist is almost perennial, it became in American writing between 1910 and 1925 a shibboleth among intellectuals. It was a revolt against middle-class life in general and its American version in particular, against the success-worship and standardization that followed in the wake of the Gilded Age, against the insularity, the decadent gentility and embalmed Puritanism of American middle-class taste.

This note is struck in Dos Passos' very first work, *ONE MAN'S INITIATION—1917* (1920), an anticipation, clearly autobiographical, of *THREE SOLDIERS*. This little book can be best understood if we keep in mind that it is the product of the early twenties of a youth whose background included an apparently well-protected childhood, a mother of Virginia-Maryland ancestry, and an education at the Choate School, followed by Harvard. He was rounding out this comfortable design in living with travel in Europe, presumably to study architecture, when he abruptly joined the issue with life by volunteering as an ambulance driver. He served on several fronts during 1916 and 1917. It is out of this that *ONE MAN'S INITIATION* came.

Its central character, Martin, an ambulance-driver in France, is an artist who wants to escape from the nightmare of it all into beauty. Like most of Dos Passos' central characters Martin writhes with revolt against the enslaving of minds and bodies that war entails. Gazing upward from an outpost he asks himself if the sky is not a

beneficent goddess who would stoop gently out of the infinite spaces and lift him to her breast, where he could lie amid the amber-fringed ruffles of cloud and look curiously down at the spinning ball of earth? It might have beauty if he were far enough away to clear his nostrils of the stench of pain.

It is the slightly esthetic yearning of the sensitive spirit to escape from harsh reality into the world of dreams. The flamboyance of the prose is not untypical of the style in general.

BUT *ONE MAN'S INITIATION* was only a trial balloon, a fluttering test of wings. It is in *THREE SOLDIERS* (1921), the best known of Dos Passos' books of this period, that the theme of *ONE MAN'S INITIATION* is developed into a mature novel and a full-blown indictment of war. There are three main characters and each illus-

trates the psychologically demoralizing effect of war: Fuselli, the grocery clerk, who knuckles under in order to "get ahead" and is paid with court martial, Chrisfield, the farm boy, who murders a bullying sergeant and deserts; and Andrews, the musician, who suffers the tortures of introspection. These characters are not vitally related and are presented in alternating sections; although this breaks the autobiographical, single-protagonist mold, anticipating a later tendency, the accent of the book finally comes to rest on Andrews—the most nearly autobiographical of the three. He tries to recapture his personality by deserting but goes down before the implacable regimentation of life in time of war. For the supreme horror of war is not so much the carnage itself as the utter dehumanizing of men in armies. He who knuckles under becomes an abased, crawling thing; he who resists is broken by force, but he may, for a moment at least, be that precious thing—himself. In *THREE SOLDIERS* Dos Passos is still grappling with a problem that occupied so many intellectuals who grew up between 1910 and 1920—that of the individual, and particularly the artist, in a regimented society. The conclusion is a bitter one; Andrews' hopelessness extends from an indictment of war to a criticism of all institutions:

It seems to me that human society has been always that, and perhaps will always be that: organizations growing and stifling individuals, and individuals revolting hopelessly against them, and at last forming new societies to crush the old societies and becoming slaves again in their turn. . . .

In its calculated air of desperation such an indictment of war was, in 1921, a departure in American fiction—even if one remembered *THE RED BADGE OF COURAGE*. It was, to be sure, treated by some as immoral, revolutionary, and the work of a cowardly slacker. All that was of course before America had got around to Barbusse, Owen, and Sassoon, or had even heard of Remarque, Stallings and Anderson, Sheriff, Aldington, March, Graves, and company. Slow paced and undramatic, *THREE SOLDIERS* has suffered in comparison; later war stories have completely overshadowed it.

Although Dos Passos' other works of this period appear today to be only of secondary importance, and one of two, like *ONE*

MAN'S INITIATION, best forgotten, each adds something to the pattern. Thus in *THE GARBAGE MAN* (produced in 1925), a radical experiment in playwriting, with stylized symbolic characters, the one idea that comes through clearly is the need for each to walk alone, not in lockstep, if he is to escape the spiritual decay and the death in life that is a "humdrum slave existence". Even in *STREETS OF NIGHT* (1923), the kind of early novel that any writer would rather forget, we get the same attitude in almost all the characters: in Fanshaw, a watery esthete who occasionally works up a feeble protest against modern life as contrasted with the Renaissance, and in Wenny, another art student, who wants to experience life in the raw but doesn't quite know how, and cries out:

Most people are mere wax figures in a show window. Have you seen a dredger ever, a lot of buckets in a row on a chain going up an inclined plane? That's what people are, tied in a row on the great dredger of society. . . I want to be a bucket standing on my own bottom, alone. . . .

Despite the childishness of the metaphor, one gets the idea. Nan, a musician, answers in much the same vein, declaring that only by living in her music can she break from the fearful routine of existence. Such is the mode of their outbursts, however, that they remind one inevitably of the romantic "Bohemian" urges that create Latin Quarters, Greenwich Villages, and Harvard "esthetes". The fact that the characters are themselves obvious and uninteresting and the style undistinguished doesn't help.

The first of Dos Passos' records of travel, *ROSINANTE TO THE ROAD AGAIN* (1922), is an introduction to Andalusian Spain, shored up with descriptions of landscape, Spanish verses, and conversations with natives. Although, like all his travel accounts, it is curiously impersonal, occasionally it reflects profounder attitudes. The contradictions of Spanish life are epitomized in a meeting with a spectral Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, the latter symbolizing the sensual Spaniard's easy acceptance of life, the former the mystical Spaniard's idealistic attempts to remould the world. At least one of the musings of the ghostly Knight is distinctly in the pattern we have discerned. ". . . I have brooded too much," he says, "on the injustice done in the world . . . Many

years ago I should have set out to right wrong—for no one but a man, an individual alone, can right a wrong; organization merely substitutes one wrong for another . . ." It is perhaps such a conception of what institutions tend to do that has prevented Dos Passos from accepting unreservedly any organized political movement. Equally revelatory in *ROSINANTE* is the admiration Dos Passos expresses for the Basque novelist, Pío Baroja, and for his almost anarchistic rejection of authority. It is an admiration that arises, I think, out of a true affinity. His summation of the Basque's work seems as much a statement of his own standards as the description of another's. For the first time introducing openly the problem of social conscience in the novel, he writes:

I don't want to imply that Baroja writes with his social conscience. He is too much of a novelist for that, too deeply interested in people as such. But it is certain that a profound sense of the evil of existing institutions lies behind every page he has written, and that occasionally, only occasionally, he allows himself to hope that something better may come out of the turmoil of our age of transition. . . Only a man who had felt all this very deeply could be so sensitive to the new spirit . . . which is shaking the foundations of the world's social pyramid . . . Baroja has felt this profoundly, and has presented it, but without abandoning the function of the novelist, which is to tell stories about people. He is never a propagandist.

One of the few forthright statements on the novelist's function that Dos Passos has made, it might well stand as an italicized epigraph to any analysis of his work. Already evident in the *ROSINANTE* volume, moreover, is a poet's sensitivity to the connotative power of words. His interest in poetry had of course been established during the same years by *A PUSH CART AT THE CURB*, his only volume of verse. But *A PUSH CART AT THE CURB* contains pieces written as early as 1916, and is often guilty of a luxuriance verging on the purple patch and of many poems which are merely picturesque or vaguely nostalgic. *ROSINANTE*, however, is capable of flaring up from time to time with water-color brightness. Although Dos Passos still tends to press the color too violently, more than one passage comes alive with the feel of wind and sun, the sound of church bells and guitars, the odors of inn and field, the whirling of dancers, the earth-hue of peasants . . .

## II

All things considered, the work of Dos Passos' first period may be said to have only partly paved the way for the departures begun in *MANHATTAN TRANSFER* (1925). Abandoning the emphasis on one individual or group, he seeks in *MANHATTAN TRANSFER* to develop a method for presenting in detail a sufficient number of lives, related and unrelated, to give a picture of society as a whole. Instead of pursuing a few characters in one narrative thread, he cuts across the face of the metropolis and follows many lives, staying with each for only a few pages at a time. The result is a rich symphony of city life, a novel of many moods and idioms fusing, disintegrating, subtly counterpointed. Of the dangers of such an approach the most insistent is that of slighting the individual pattern; what is remarkable about *MANHATTAN TRANSFER* is that it presents a goodly company of characters and yet manages to retain some feeling for the importance of individual personalities, illusions, ambitions, failures. It achieves this by swiftness of pace, ellipses, and telescoping of details. Although such an approach may provide a sense of society as a whole, it seems to sacrifice some of the sustained emotional effects and cumulative force that can be attained by an unbroken single thread of narrative concentrating on a few characters.

But what Dos Passos does attain with unconditional success is the impact of the City. He gets it not only through the people who make it up but through all its countless effects on the senses. Next to *MANHATTAN TRANSFER* the novels of those who, like O. Henry, had been accepted as catching the physical or spiritual impact of New York seem thin, formalized and superficial; by comparison *MANHATTAN TRANSFER* is infinitely rich and unblinkingly candid. It catches as have few novels the full sensuous meaning of the swarming, huddled humanity of a great city, with all its smells, myriad voices, innumerable hues . . . A hundred environments are here: the hot food-thick air of the basement restaurant, the barren tinsel glitter of the backstage dressing-room, the whiskey and smoke of the crowded bar, the sunstriped quilt-hung slum streets, the sour clutter of the tenement bedroom, the luxurious hush of the millionaire's sickroom, the ferryslip, park bench, boudoir, hobo fire . . . The point is that Dos Passos has

been able to work into his narrative, without making it seem a catalogue, vivid panchromatic sequences from scores of typical city circumstances. To render all this he has brought to bear a sensationally concentrated diction wherein, like the Imagists, he pushes toward frontiers of language with explosive verbs, dislocated epithets, and usages that seek to gouge the eye out of meaning. When on occasion he adds racy colloquialisms to these his prose becomes a spillway of daringly fused effects. It is this style, combined with an ever-shifting focus, a cinema-like dissolving of one scene into the next, that finally succeeds in conveying to the reader a full sense of the protean nature of this particular life.

What finally are the implications of this vision of the city? Although Dos Passos never explicitly indicates what he thinks of the creatures he parades before us, the patterns of their lives are significant enough. A few lead tolerably normal lives but in the end *MANHATTAN TRANSFER* has presented us—and this conclusion is theirs as well as mine—with an overwhelming predominance of failures—embezzlers, drunkards, panhandlers, perverts, prostitutes, psychotics. If they don't begin this way, life in our time apparently sees to it that they end this way. In economics as well as in love, frustration seems to be the keyword. Ellen Thatcher tries marriage after marriage but remains frigid to everything but the memory of a young man who drank himself to death; Gus McNeil loves his wife but his wife loves George Baldwin but George loves Ellen but Ellen is ice; Bud, the country boy, comes hopefully to the city and ends up on the Bowery; "Dutch", jobless, and the girl with whom he can never find privacy anywhere in the vast city, become bandits; Oglethorpe and Hunter are pitiful perverts; Sandbourne, the creative architect, writhes in a commercial rut . . . All are mismated in love, thwarted in their careers, trapped by life. The image that Jimmie Herf, the central character, repeats is that of squirrels in a cage. And what of Jimmie himself? Disgusted by the endless round of lies and clichés in newspaperwork and rejected in love, he throws up the squirrel-cage routine and sets off penniless down the open road: he may be going nowhere but at least he has stepped out of the cage. In this he is comparable to those characters in the earlier

works who decided that the only answer was to break from the mold—though it might mean loneliness and starvation.

Avoiding another characteristic of the traditional novel, Dos Passos makes virtually no observations concerning his characters. This, he seems to say, is the way such people act; if the judgment is needed, it is up to you. He makes even the stream-of-consciousness a vehicle for sense impressions and reverie rather than statements concerning characters. Although interesting these rarely prove revelatory; we learn too little of what motivates his characters. It is only necessary to think of Thackeray's analyses of the motives of Becky Sharp or of Dostoyevsky's Raskolnikoff forever analyzing himself, to realize the difference. It may be that this is the way we get to know people in real life, that only the traditional novelists dared to practice omniscience, but the result is that Ellen Thatcher and Jimmie Herf and Stanwood Emery often seem vague or enigmatic.

It should be noted, finally, that were it not for the hindsight furnished us by his later novels it is doubtful whether we would be aware of social implications in *MANHATTAN TRANSFER*. Would we recognize that what we get here is not simply a picture of a decadent group or "lost generation" moods but a sample of how all men are caught in a set-up which is economically and spiritually fatal? This is never brought into the spotlight; it is simply the sum up to which the facts add—if you have been taught to add.

### III

The works which fill the period between *MANHATTAN TRANSFER* and *THE 42ND PARALLEL* (1930), the first volume of *U. S. A.*, are only of minor importance. *ORIENT EXPRESS* (1927), a diary kept in the Near East and Orient, is, however, by far the best of his travel books. It succeeds remarkably in conveying a sense of the stagnation and fetid breath of life in the East, of languor and slow atrophy and civilizations rotting away. Its major quality is certainly the tropical richness of its prose, verging on poetry, clotted with imagery, and sultry with the color and smell and look of the Oriental world. Although essentially sensuous, it, too, manages more than once to drive home the author's now familiar

conception of institutions as destroyers. The passage is a reaction to the new Russia and beyond that a broad but vital statement of political ideals:

Will the result be the same old piling up of miseries again, or a faith and a lot of words like Islam or Christianity, or will it be something impossible, new, unthought of, a life bare and vigorous without being savage, a life naked and godless where goods and institutions will be broken to fit men, instead of men being ground down fine and sifted in the service of Things?

Passionate in its idealism, the passage soars out from the rank sensuousness and the air of putrefaction which fill *ORIENT EXPRESS*.

The increase of Dos Passos' social consciousness is clearly traceable in the second of his plays, *AIRWAYS, INC.*, (1928). It centers around a strike-town family the members of which are sufficiently varied to represent a cross-section of American society and the twisted destinies which are the lot of each type under capitalism. Although not without resemblances to the "strike plays" of later date, its ending hews rather to the characteristic Dos Passos pattern: those who succumb to a system which destroys individuals are doomed to the fate of slaves; those who resist may be defeated—as are the strikers here—but through their resistance are distinguished by those qualities which alone differentiate men from beasts. It might be added that the only other play Dos Passos has published, *FORTUNE HEIGHTS* (1933), completes the shift from the fantasia drama of the individual-against-institutions in *THE GARBAGE MAN* to the realistic social drama. In this, another tragedy of the economic system—the saga of the filling station grandly opened in boom days, the slow failure, violent foreclosure, and the road nowhere along with an army of dispossessed—Dos Passos again seems to suggest that revolt, even though doomed, is itself spiritually good for the spiritually down-trodden.

Even in his travel accounts of this period, *IN ALL COUNTRIES*, (1934), the theme of economic freedom pushes to the fore; in fact, his interest in socialist enterprises guides his footsteps. His entries concerning Mexico (1926 and 1932) disclose above all the strength of his sympathy with the revolutionary peons in their

fight against their oppressors—the landowners, army officers, clericals and American profiteers. His reactions to Russia (1926) are by no means so unequivocal: he is hopeful but suspicious, with a definite tendency to reserve judgment. He reveals admiration for the visionary intensity of Soviet youth and a deep sense of the implications of the possible success of such an experiment, but also a great distrust of the spiritual effect of a relentless OGPU and of anything that even smacks of dictatorship. And that was in 1926. Moreover, in contrast to the poetry and color of the early *ROSINANTE TO THE ROAD AGAIN*, his entries devoted to his 1933 visit to Spain are given over to politico-social analyses. All that can be said now is that three years after they were written, events in Spain rendered them merely historically interesting, fading observations out of the past. Not quite so dated, although even more journalistic, is a series of sketches written from the sore spots of depression America and filled with sardonic reports of the various political parties. Although Dos Passos is definitely of the Left, his accounts of party conventions spare none in reproducing the dismal flim-flam that marked each. Only one circumstance arouses his compassion throughout—the plight of the workers and job-hunters. Although ephemera, these papers reveal in their stripped bitterness the intensity of Dos Passos' sympathies. But they remain not so much propaganda for any political philosophy as simply pictures of unsavory aspects of American life.

But all this now seems to have been only a preparation for the group of three novels [*THE 42ND PARALLEL*, *NINETEEN NINETEEN*, and *THE BIG MONEY*, called *U. S. A.* (1930-1937)] which represents, for the time being, the apex of Dos Passos' achievement. In *U. S. A.* the earlier attitude of the artist pitted against conventionalized life has made way, or, more accurately, has been absorbed into a much broader struggle. What apparently happened to Dos Passos—as to so many intellectuals of his generation—is that the fight against Philistines and their institutions was gradually compelled to spread out until it included the struggle of all the underprivileged, and recognized that the conflict was as much economic and world-wide as that of one sensitive intellectual. Dos Passos' ideal was still liberty; what changed was the conception

of what that included. His work had simply admitted to a greater extent the pressure of economic forces and had thereby become an espousal of the underprivileged; his Bohemian anti-materialism had developed into a criticism of the profit system, and the escapist's dream of a life somewhere among amber-fringed clouds had turned into a desire for radical action against social injustice. That Dos Passos is not content with merely passive resentment against such injustice is borne out by his activity in the Sacco-Vanzetti case, when he picketed in Boston, wrote a 127-page booklet on the case, and was jailed, and in the Kentucky coal strikes, when he was wounded during a flying visit to Harlan County.

The culmination of all this, then, is U. S. A. with its 1,450-page attempt to embrace the whole range of American life, to concentrate, as have few works of fiction, as much on the spirit or historic temper of the age as on the lives of individuals. Like *MANHATTAN TRANSFER* it abandons the traditional unity of a central character, milieu or special theme. But it improves on *MANHATTAN TRANSFER* at many points: while retaining the sense of flux and many lives being lived simultaneously, it regains much of that feeling for individuals which the earlier novel had dissipated and increases the possibility of sustained scenes by including fewer characters. With a technical boldness in itself provocative Dos Passos adds to the narrative three separate devices, each approaching the temper of the period by a different path. His attitude seems to be: What one device doesn't do, another may. One is the "Newsreel", a composite of headlines, fragments of news items, speeches and popular songs, flashing, like a film going too fast, jumbled glimpses of the past. Capable of clever, comic, and painful effects, it nevertheless soon exhausts its potentialities and becomes something to be glanced at rather than read. Another device is "The Camera Eye", stream-of-association recall of the author's own memories from each period, fusing in Joycean fashion remembered sensations, conversations, scenes. Occasionally evocative but often merely obscure, it never contributes enough to justify itself. The third device consists of scattered brief biographies of twenty-seven dominant personalities of the age, from Presidents and industrialists to artists and labor leaders. Selecting details with an instinct for the dramatic and significant, and pre-

senting them in an impressionistic, broken-lined arrangement which charges each phrase with rich overtones, Dos Passos here develops an impressive form. Such pieces as those on Veblen, Wesley Everest or the Wright Brothers contain, I feel, some of the most memorable passages in contemporary fiction.

The most remarkable aspect of *U. S. A.* is, however, its scope. It presents in convincing detail twelve major characters and a host of minor ones from every walk of American life: the foot-loose garage mechanic who becomes a stock manipulator, the exploited sailor knocking about the ports of the world, the woman who passes through the gutter on her way to movie stardom, the real-estate salesman who builds himself into a publicity mogul, the idealist who becomes the militant fighter for lost causes . . . A single character like Mac is established in rapid succession as book salesman, railroad worker, lumberman, farmhand, itinerant printer, warehouse helper . . . Equally impressive is the variety of homes and specific locales thoroughly and vitally reproduced: a Minneapolis German garage-owner, interior decorators in New York, a barkeeper's shack on a Long Island beach, a vaudeville team in a boarding house, middle-class Jews, Mexican pecan-shellcrackers, lower-class Chicago Irish, Cubans in Havana, Hollywood potentates, convent students, society debs, tramps . . . Dos Passos has obviously combined an imposing range of actual experience with the capacity to absorb, even during the briefest contact, the essence of a way of life or the spirit of a locale. And *U. S. A.* is able to hold so much by virtue of the author's peculiar ability to telescope lives and dispense with all introductions and transitions. A sentence reels with a whole sequence of events and a page with an entire period in a life. The narrative may sometimes cry out for an extended or developed scene, or seem hurried and angular; but it manages in the end to say more in one paragraph of a way of life than many novels convey in entire chapters.

And it is partly by such devices that *U. S. A.* is able to reproduce, as a dominant effect, all the successive tempers of the age—the optimism before 1914, the gathering shadows of war, the varieties of war madness, the demoralization beginning during the war and continuing after, the post-War disillusion, the neurotic maladjustments and the hectic search for excitement,

the wild economic speculation, the artificial prosperity at the top and the growing unrest beneath—all leading to the utter collapse of 1929. It is a crack train, crowded with desperately drunken passengers, roaring faster and faster toward an abyss where the trestle has been swept away. Except in this sense the narrative in U. S. A. has no ending. But this is enough—the pattern of most of these lives has been established. And again the prevalent design is spiritual failure and frustration. For with a few notable exceptions character after character in U. S. A. embarks on life with commendable ideals or fairly wholesome ambitions only to be corrupted by forces which he does not understand or which, when he does understand and oppose them, defeat him. The pattern here is not, however, as pervasive as it was in *MANHATTAN TRANSFER* essentially because the idealism of a few characters shines throughout and certain historical biographies light up the darkness from time to time with flaring records of self-sacrifice, intellectual courage, and the will to build a better world. "Daughter" and Eveline Johnson commit suicide, Charley Anderson and Joe Williams, demoralized, die by violence, J. Ward Morehouse and his imitator, Richard Ellsworth Savage, turn into lonely and unhappy men, only half-deluded by their own quackery, but Mary French, after the harshest of setbacks, returns at the very end of the trilogy to the fight for the oppressed and dispossessed. Similarly, the bitter taste left by such portraits as those of Hearst and Insull is balanced to a certain extent by the vivid sense of aspiration left by those of Randolph Bourne, Jack Reed, and others.

There is, in fine, hardly a line in U. S. A. that does not grow out of a considered concept of society, a concept, moreover, carrying with it certain implications as to where the root of evil lies. *Implications*, I say, for Dos Passos, like the Pio Baroja whom he admired, is too good a novelist to allow the propagandist impulse to come to the surface or hamstring his imagination. He manages always to remain the recorder of lives and the mirror of actual people. Yet there is hardly one of his fictive or historical characters that does not in some way underscore the view of our society as one in which the profit system corrupts or crushes, leaving those who climb to the top ruthless and unhappy, the intellectuals decadent, venal or escapist, and the lower classes

wretched and abused. It is a radically untraditional picture but so convincing that it is difficult to believe, as some critics have charged, that Dos Passos has superimposed or forced the pattern.

#### IV

The quality and breadth of U. S. A. naturally aroused high expectations. That is partly why *ADVENTURES OF A YOUNG MAN* (1939) seemed disappointing, for it represented, if not a retreat, at least a running thin of the creative intensity and restless originality that had distinguished his four previous novels. It drops all the experimental devices, returning to a conventional narrative style and the traditional biographical approach. In a narrative which seems narrow after the great spread of *U. S. A.* it tells the story of Glenn Spotswood's growth from a sheltered, genteel childhood to fighting for Loyalist Spain. In its handling of the development of the sensitive, well-behaved boy into the militant radical, it is skilled and generally convincing. He has to struggle to get through college and is laid open to the influence first of a liberal college instructor and, thereafter, of a group of Communists. He takes work in a Texas bank but is soon involved in defending exploited pecan-shellors. After getting a taste of vigilante methods, he joins the Communist Party, and as an organizer in the Southern coal-fields sees poverty at its lowest and the terrorism of mine-operators at its worst. Up to this point the novel is an expertly executed study in that striking phenomenon of the 'twenties and 'thirties, a passage from middle-class complacency to militant radicalism. Although there is already a satiric slant to his portraits of liberals and radicals, the book still retains something of the spirit of his other novels. But from this point on, with ever-narrowing scope, it grows into an embittered criticism of the Communist Party. Dos Passos, dedicated to the hatred of institutions, proves with triumphant bitterness that even a formula for social betterment can subjugate men to institutions and thereby becomes deadly. When Glenn disagrees with the Party he is immediately expelled; later he volunteers with the Spanish Loyalists; seen talking to an anti-Communist Spaniard he is planted in a front-line death trap. Although in this last third of the book Glenn is still ostensibly vowed heart and soul

to overthrowing capitalism, the narrative forgets all that in its intentness on exposing a sect. The overtones of positive social sympathies, of communion with the downtrodden, grow fainter and fainter, to be at last completely displaced by an acrimonious report of party chicanery. The pervasive emotion here is not a large one; it smacks too often of rancor—understandable perhaps, but hardly palatable or moving.

Although such a limited intention is bound to have its effect on characterization, several figures in the book emerge as not unworthy additions to the Dos Passos gallery: the Gulicks and their "liberal crowd", the Spingarns, those hyper-intellectual, hyper-radical Jews, the coal-field mountaineers including Wheatley the pathetic daughter of a hill-billy, Irving Silverstone, a little Machiavelli in the Communist Party . . . However, when we compare the patterns of these lives with those in U. S. A. we realize that although the latter were on the whole just as depressing, the spirit that created them was somehow socially positive. The greyest areas of U. S. A. were shot through with streamers of courage; it let sound through the ugly discord created by most of its characters a few lives like clarions. It may have recorded all the diseases of our age but it suggested at the same time that the very recognition of these was a step toward appreciating how they cried out for change. By contrast *ADVENTURES OF A YOUNG MAN* is simply bitter. Spiritual disunity undermines it: it builds up the need for social change and then seeks to demonstrate that the only organized group toward which the idealistic protagonist is drawn has been corrupted. The head nods yea while the mouth talks about nay. Since in many ways it seems to represent only a dead end, it is difficult from such a work to tell what Dos Passos' future direction will be. The broad highway from which he has detoured still lies open. One can hope that *ADVENTURES OF A YOUNG MAN* was only the disburdening of a momentarily disillusioned man, a personal interlude between broad-visioned contributions to the interpretation, in fiction, of our time.

It is, I think, clear by now wherein Dos Passos' significance lies. He has again and again hazarded bold and enlightening solutions to problems of both content and structure that few traditional

novelists have even recognized and fewer still have dealt with. Paramount has been his attempt to get a sense of the whole complex social panorama, and, as corollary, a sense of the flux, of the simultaneity of lives and events, and the passage of time in terms of the entire culture as well as individuals. Equally significant have been his attempts to integrate the individual with the period, to leave us everywhere conscious of how the age has molded the man, made him one of its peculiar products. It may seem at times that his primary intention has been to present only the evils of our society, and thus suggest to men's minds the need for remedying them. If this were so it would do him no dishonor, but it would make him less of a novelist and more of a propagandist than he is. His chief aim seems rather to have been that of giving us a more realistic view of the relationship between the individual and his time, and thereby a truer picture of each. If the effect of this has been that one group's inhumanity to another or the injustices promoted by the social system were often laid bare, certainly he has not tried to evade such consequences.

This is the work of John Dos Passos to date. Viewed broadly it is the product of a writer whose humanity renders him acutely sensitive to the nature of his age while his intense idealism deeply colors his every reaction to it. The task of such an artist in this time of flux and disintegration is to continue to paint the confusion around him without becoming lost in it.

by Floyd Stovall

## WHAT PRICE AMERICAN LITERATURE?

### AMERICAN SCHOLAR AND AMERICAN LITERATURE

TWO questions I conceive to be of importance to American scholars studying American literature.<sup>1</sup> The first is, What is the place of American literature in the college English curriculum? The second is, What is the proper relation of the American student and teacher of English (the scholar of my title) to the literature of his own country?

The first question assumes that there is a body of literature rightly called "American", and that this American literature deserves to be studied as a separate development and not as a branch of English literature. It is now three hundred years since the publication of the *Bay Psalm Book*, the first book to be printed in Anglo-American. Roughly speaking, the literature of America parallels in its development the literature of England from the time of Milton to the present. Although the quality of American literature is admittedly inferior during the first two centuries of this period, the same cannot confidently be asserted of the last century. The value of our native literature is enhanced for us by the fact that it is the preservative and the vehicle of our national culture. This importance has been fully recognized in the high schools, where one year is commonly devoted to English literature, and one to American literature.

What of the colleges? I have examined the catalogues of about seventy colleges and universities, both public and private, in all parts of the United States, and I find that, while a few still offer little or no American literature in the English curriculum, most of them have allowed it a fairly adequate representation among courses in literature. American literature constitutes about 20%

<sup>1</sup>This paper was read, in a slightly fuller form, at the meeting of the newly-formed South-Central branch of the Modern Language Association in Shreveport, La., Oct. 1940.

and English literature about 80% of the total offering. In arriving at this figure, I leave out of consideration all courses in composition, language, criticism, and literary types such as the drama and the novel which combine English and American productions. A few colleges seem to be following the lead of the high schools by offering a semester of modern English literature and a semester of American literature in the sophomore year. Most schools, however, reserve the sophomore survey exclusively for English and provide a full year course for the survey of American literature on the junior level.

On the basis of the replies received to an inquiry which I recently sent to a number of professors of English literature, mostly heads of departments, in schools throughout the country, I feel justified in saying that our colleagues who teach English literature fully approve of the place in the curriculum now held by American literature,, and that the majority of them would consent to its gradual enlargement, say to 30% of the total. In my own opinion, we have no cause for complaint. With the passage of time, the disparity between the two literatures will naturally become less, and before many generations have passed they may conceivably occupy an equal place in the curriculum.

The consequences of the present war in Europe, no matter who wins, will almost certainly tend to equalize English and American literature. If England should be bound more closely to Europe, the obvious result in this country will be a nationalistic movement that will glorify our own literature at the expense of the literature of England. If, on the other hand, England should be drawn more closely to the United States, the result might be the incorporation of early English literature in the history of our own. We would be loyal to Anglo-American culture, but the emphasis in our country would be upon the American element rather than the English. In either event it will become the duty of American scholars, and especially of college teachers of American literature, to keep their heads clear and their blood cool so that they may not be unduly swayed by popular sentiment or prejudice. American literature is now firmly established in the college curriculum; the gravest danger is not so much that it may lost its place there as that through a misapplied patriotism it may usurp

a place that it does not yet deserve. We must see to it that the growth of American literature in the curriculum is justified on other grounds than national pride.

## II

The second and more important of my questions is, What is the proper relation of the student and teacher of English to the literature of his own country?

To begin with, he should hold the literature of his country in greater respect than he apparently does. There is widespread belief that literary works produced on this side of the Atlantic are not only poorer in quality but easier to master than those which have their origin on the other side. There is no justification for this belief, and yet it persists. It is to be explained, in part, by the fact that there has been too much sentimentality and too little serious study in our reading of American literature. Until comparatively recent years, it was thought to be suitable more for children in the public schools than for college students and mature readers, and this prejudice exists even yet. When American literature first began to be offered in college courses it was taught by ex-high school teachers or by such second-rate college professors as were not entrusted with English literature. There were good teachers of American literature, but there were not enough. Now there are more, but still there are not enough. Any person who has had the responsibility of employing a college teacher of American literature knows that out of ten available prospects scarcely one will have had the necessary ability and training. There are plenty of young people who desire to teach American literature and they pursue graduate work to that end, but they are often the most talented in the graduate school. The best are still absorbed by English literature, particularly by the Renaissance and the Eighteenth Century. I strongly suspect that many students specialize in American literature because it is easier to get a degree by that route. Professors, I fear, are tempted to accept the situation philosophically. We are perhaps too proud of the number of people writing dissertations in the American field. If we are to establish teaching and research in American

literature on the level of the best in English literature, we must do it on the basis of quality, not quantity.

The problem of giving adequate training for teachers of American literature is not solved, however, by the multiplication of graduate courses in the field. From the error of knowing too little of his field the student is in danger of learning much at the expense of that thorough grounding in English literature and language without which his scholarship is shallow. There are graduate schools, I believe, where one may take most of his literature courses in the American field, and none but elementary courses in the language. In my own opinion it would be better to require of the prospective teacher only two or three graduate courses, besides the undergraduate survey, in American literature. In short, the well-prepared teacher of American literature will have done more work, not less, than his colleague in the English field. And not only will he have done a greater quantity of study, but he will also have done work of an equal quality. If something must be slighted in the graduate school, it would be wiser for the prospective teacher to slight his specialty, in which he expects to be actively at work afterwards, than the background and correlative material, in which he may not find it convenient to do spade work after his graduate study is completed.

### III

So much for the student. What of the professor? I once heard of a professor of history (not English, of course) who, on receiving the Ph.D. degree, remarked: "Thank God, my education is complete! Now I won't have to study any more." Some of our friends who are alarmed at the fervor with which members of the Modern Language Association devote themselves to research might be surprised, though perhaps not comforted, to know how many of their colleagues in English have secretly cherished the same thought that the professor of history indiscreetly spoke aloud. I agree that there is something vicious in an administrative policy that drives university teachers into uncongenial books and articles. Yet even this is preferable to the intellectual root-rot that attacks so many academic minds after they settle down into the sinecure of a college professorship.

Genuine research needs no defense, and yet it has enemies, the two worst being the man who does it merely for the sake of professional advancement and the man who rebels against this necessity and vilifies it. There is, however, another class of scholars who, though honest, bring discredit upon research. One of this class once said to a graduate student who had ventured to express a critical opinion, "You are not supposed to have opinions! Your business is to collect facts." The word "scholar" has sometimes been applied to such a collector of facts to distinguish him from those who have opinions. In some quarters the very word "research" has become an abomination, and even the innocent word "scholar" is suspect. This is all very unfortunate and quite unnecessary. Those who have opinions, the critics, threaten to withdraw themselves from those who collect facts, the researchers; the researchers, in turn, condemn the critics as unscientific. In reality, research is not the antithesis of criticism but its complement, and the true scholar is equally capable of both. I would go so far as to say we should not attempt a formal distinction, but let them intermingle freely in our group programs. Some papers will of necessity be concerned more with materials than with values, particularly such papers as may be devoted to the exploration of local literary history. Others, particularly those devoted to the great works of our literary masters, will often contribute to the establishment of values. Perhaps too many of the members and associates of this group have been rather timid in criticism and too much inclined to be mere collectors of facts. At the same time I realize that such timidity may be a safeguard against immature judgments, of which some of us have contributed our share. The critic's end may be meaning and value; but he cannot derive those except from facts, which are the materials of research. If he will not do his own research, he must use the facts discovered by others. The researcher, for his part, surely does not collect facts for their own sake; he expects to use them himself to discover meanings and make critical judgments, or else he intends them for another's use. Therefore let him who will, or can, pass from research to criticism, but let him not deny his brother who will or must be content with research alone.

## IV

The question has also been raised as to how far, if at all, this group should concern itself with the problems of pedagogy. Once upon a time, I believe, the Modern Language Association accepted pedagogical papers on its programs, but in the course of its development they were lost and other organizations set up to provide a hearing for them. If here in this central region of the South we can hold criticism and research together, perhaps we can also resurrect pedagogy. Some of our States, including my own, have organizations at whose meetings research, criticism, and pedagogy manage to fraternize, albeit with some brotherly wranglings. Why not here? After all, is not research, and is not criticism, a branch of pedagogy? Let us not shrink from the word "pedagogy". If it lost caste long ago in collegiate circles, who can say that "research" and "scholar" will not go the same way eventually? Perhaps we can save them all by restoring them to their former unity. If there is a better way than we now have of leading young people to and understanding and appreciation of literature, we should all be happy to be informed of it. To be sure, pedagogical discussion soon grows thin and repetitive, but I should be in favor of letting it back into the family circle on probation. It has at least the claim of a poor relation. (And in this connection it may be well to call attention to the deplorable decline, even among scholars, in the art of writing. I have heard of learned young doctors of philosophy whose articles had to be rewritten for them before they were grammatically suitable for publication. Perhaps more attention to the technique of composition on our part would produce future scholars who can write with correctness if not with grace. Of course I do not suggest that we consider any pedagogical theories that are alien to the traditions of humanism, but I do believe that if there were a better understanding between the high school and the college we might hope for more success than we have lately achieved in the educational process.)

There is one other problem, not unrelated to these, to which I should like to pay my respects. This is the extent to which literature should be studied in relation to the social sciences. If the nineteenth century may be called the century of natural science, the twentieth promises to be the century of social science. And

as the methods of the chemical and biological laboratories came to be applied to the study of literature then, so now it appears that the methods of psychology and economics must be applied. The fear has been expressed that in our enthusiasm for social values the study of literature as an art may be lost, and we hear the cry of sensitive souls, as we heard it in the nineteenth century, that the value of literature is in itself and not in what it may communicate of philosophy, history, or scientific truth. I am not unsympathetic with this rebellion against the course of things. But it is nothing short of critical suicide to assume, as a few seem to have done, that the remedy for too much communication is no communication. If the more individualistic minds among creators and scholars draw away from the vulgar mass and erect a cult of the esoteric—not to say the unintelligible—the general good of literature will not be advanced. Amidst all the cant about a changing world and the principle of experimentation applied to pedagogy and politics, it is difficult for the scholar himself not to pursue some new idea merely for the sake of its newness, as if all value lay in the new and none in the old.

All that I am saying is commonplace enough. Perhaps it comes only to this, that whereas pedagogy and criticism and research are all useful functions of the teacher, and whereas it is good for the college professor to interest himself in the literature of his own region and in the literature of his own country, yet it is a dangerous practice for the scholar to devote himself to any one of these good things to the exclusion or disparagement of other good things. Already there is a strong sentiment in the country for requiring the colleges as well as the public schools to "teach" Americanism. I hope I shall not be thought un-American if I question the wisdom of attempting such a thing. I would almost as soon attempt to teach mother-love. Surely Americanism is to be developed through the reading of American literature if it is to be developed at all, but if it is "taught" dogmatically it may in the persons so taught create the very bigotry which it ought to prevent.

These, then, are the problems, as I see them, that most immediately face the American scholar in his attitude towards American literature.

by A. E. Johnson

## YORICK ON HAMLET

*"He hath borne me on his back a thousand times." Hamlet.*

Already I had borne him on my back  
Three times; but "just another one", he craves  
And antlers his little arms. Who could refuse?  
I feel his warm dark eyes about my ears  
Like silent coals, yet seem to hear far-off  
The tumbling questions that he stammers out:  
"Does—does everybody have to die, Yorick?  
"Do you take off at night the cap and bells?  
"Are jesters born that way, or do they learn?  
"Could Hamlet become one if he tried?"

I try to tell him that the hour comes  
When most of us are glad to slip away  
From this unpeaceful world, or king or clown;  
But for the credence that he gives to this  
I might have said it with my jester's voice.  
I tell him yes, I doff my cap and bells  
At night, and many a moment of the day,  
And wasn't born with them, no jester is:  
And thereupon I take them off and show  
My polished skull, hairless as any egg.  
He feels it with his finger gingerly,  
And then his eyes diminish to a bird's.  
The blossom of their wonder being spent.

Could he become a jester when he's big?  
At this I hold my tongue lest it should say  
That he has made a prettier jest than I  
There in his question. The bare idea  
That anyone so serious should be a clown

Limits the clowning he will ever do,  
Although, God knows, the merriment in me  
Is weak at times, built in the mind alone,  
Stale as a loaf that has been overlooked  
Within a larder where the light is dim:  
The mustard that I use was mixed long since;  
All that my frozen intellect does now  
Is adding water to the crusted pot  
Like thrifty housewives.

I tell him he will be the king someday  
And then must try to be as good a one  
As his father. "I will," he says absurdly  
Like some romantic yokel plighting troth.  
I tell him when that day at length arrives  
There'll be another jester in my place,  
And he'll be much too big for pickobacks;  
Which makes him look a little sad for me  
And spoils a notion that he can't give up  
That jesters do not die. Were I to try  
To tell him that these bells about my ears  
Scarce ever sound within my muffled heart  
He'd find me at my job.

Then suddenly he sees the thoughtful king  
Meditatively walking in the orchard,  
And frogs it downward from my back swiftly  
As might an urchin from an orchard wall,  
With never a word of thanks to me, the horse,  
Nor any further thought of turning clown  
Than has his reverend sire.  
He slips his own into his father's hand  
Who still stalks on, and seems as if he walked  
Companioned with the ghost of him a child.

I fear the boy will need a school of us  
When he is king. He'll take it seriously,  
Too seriously for his own good health,

More seriously than his father even  
Nor bring his father's patience to the job.  
Haply he'll do away with jesters then  
Finding his world too full of natural clowns  
And being over-serious in himself.

But there, he's fond of me, and I'm content.  
A more discriminating little prince  
Was never known in Denmark or beyond  
Nor one so philosophic for his years:  
The Chancellor can make no way with him  
For all his smiling and his flowery talk,  
Nor is he not his redlipped mother's boy.  
The years will teach him tolerance, I guess,  
Needful even in a king; and then maybe  
He'll wish that he could mount again  
A jester's back, and ride him easily  
As fain he would the great clown world.

I shall be wearing then the sober dress  
Of the silent earth, nor ever be recalled  
To his most dutiful and solemn mind—  
Unless perchance his weak and horny hand  
Should one day feel its own unhairy skull,  
To be reminded, in the dim dark way  
The soul explores the caverns of its past,  
Of having done this very thing before  
To someone somewhere very long ago  
In the anonymous past; where I shall be,  
There in the churchyard with my cap of earth  
(Never to be removed by night or day);  
And only one great unavailingly bell  
Above my head.

by Esmond Wright

## HISTORY: THE "NEW" AND THE NEWER

THE prevalent attitude towards historical writing in the twentieth century has been known to historians as "The New History", and it has been widely held and notably popularized by the work of James Harvey Robinson<sup>1</sup> and Harry Elmer Barnes.<sup>2</sup> But of late we have heard less of the term, and it will be the purpose of this article to assess the permanence of the New History's contribution, and to predict the emergence of a Newer History still.

Broadly speaking, the New History represented the tendency in historical writing that was popular during the first three decades of the century, but which was heralded towards the end of the last century; the tendency to look at history with an emphasis on social forces and social motives, to stress the group rather than the individual, society rather than the State, the people one and multifarious, in their art, their religion, their recreations, their literary, economic and collective activities, rather than their achievements in politics and legislation. It was the product of a dawning social conscience and a broad humanity.

### I

The term was first given its particular cogency in Prof. Eggleston's Presidential Address to the American Historical Association in 1900. It became a war-cry, the title of James Harvey Robinson's book, whose first edition came out in 1912, and received classic statement—and not infrequent restatements—in the many studies of Harry Elmer Barnes. That it was to some degree on the wane in 1934 can be seen by reading Charles Beard's *THE NATURE OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES*, published in that year. Since

<sup>1</sup>Robinson, James Harvey.: *THE NEW HISTORY*, N. Y., 1912; *THE MIND IN THE MAKING*, N. Y., 1921.

<sup>2</sup>See especially his *THE NEW HISTORY AND THE SOCIAL STUDIES*, and *THE HISTORY AND PROSPECTS OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES* (ed.), N. Y. 1925.

then, the term has fallen into desuetude, and the writing, like the making, of History has become the chaotic champing-ground of the amateur.

In the conventional estimate, the New History was traced to two causes: the increased dependence on allied social sciences, then developing rapidly, like archaeology, anthropology, astronomy, geology, psychology, geography, statistics, and sociology; and the reaction that came against the romantic and nationalistic types of history then dominating the field. That these were the principal contributing factors it would be idle to deny: the new studies all invaded the field of the historian, compelling him to attempt a broader synthesis of, and to acknowledge obligations to, the social disciplines. New ideas of cosmic time proved that man was horribly modern on arrival, and the image of the clock was widely used to prove his recent entrance; the neglected pre-literary period became the province of the anthropologist and ethnologist; Egypt and Mesopotamia and Crete were studied with a new curiosity; and names like W. T. Ripley, Clark Wissler and Melville Herskovits in America, like those of Flinders-Petrie and Malinowski in England, all fall in the no-man's land of historical anthropology. The historian had even to reckon with mythology, for Sir James G. Frazer in his monumental *GOLDEN BOUGH* proved with a rare charm that myths were nothing less than "documents of human thought in the embryo." F. J. Teggart suggested that "Everywhere the beginnings of political organisation have been determined by the physical disposition of the land" and Ellsworth Huntington went even further in his suggestions of climatic influences. The effect on the historian could not be other than liberal and vitalising. Yet if the cause of the New History is to be traced to an idea, or a series of ideas, it would be truer and simpler to say that, like its new allies, it had felt the invigorating force of the evolutionary gale that swept away the cobwebs in men's minds. The new sciences themselves owed their origin and development to Darwin and Spencer, or to what Darwin and Spencer came swiftly to typify.

<sup>1</sup>Frazer, Sir James George: Preface to *MYTHS OF THE ORIGIN OF FIRE*. London, 1936.

<sup>2</sup>Teggart, F. J.: *THE PROCESSES OF HISTORY*, p. 52. Yale University Press, 1918.

Darwin and Spencer did for learning something of what Bacon did for it in the sixteenth century: they emphasized pragmatism, experiment, and change. The concepts of Evolution, Circumstantial Selection, and Adaptation to Environment were accepted as axiomatic by all thinkers, and applied, often uncritically, to social issues. This was as true of disciplines to which the New History owed relatively little, like Dewey's educational doctrines, William James's pragmatism, and J. R. Commons's institutional economics, as of its more kindred sciences: all spoke the language of biological science, the magic words of change and progress. And not without cause, for Evolution and the Survival of the Fittest could serve many masters, the equalitarian socialist no less than the individualistic capitalist, the humanitarian as well as the militarist. So it was that, in Shaw's epigram: "One touch of Darwin made the whole world kin."<sup>8</sup>

That this was indeed a broadening of the base of the social science, rather than a mere deepening of historical knowledge, is further proved by the work of Henry Adams. In his case, however, it was physics rather than biology on which he drew, Kelvin rather than Darwin he idolised, and pessimism rather than optimism to which he fell a victim. The gentle ironist of the *EDUCATION*, whose motif is the *Dynamo* and the *Virgin*, is a morbid and perverse spirit in *THE DEGRADATION OF THE DEMOCRATIC DOGMA*, and *THE RULE OF PHASE*; there history becomes a tale of a mechanical dissolution, determined by the irrefutable law of the dissipation of energy and restrained only by the physical concept of an equilibrium—but in the efficacy of that concept Adams puts as little faith as any modern European statesman. The cause of Adams' despair, like the language in which it finds expression, is derived from the science of physics.

The New History owes less, then, to the new social studies than it and they together owe to Darwin. So too the developments in scientific thought were buttressed and strengthened by technical and social changes; by Industrial and Social Revolutions and a sudden transformation in material culture; by a machine technique, a factory system, expanded business units, increased investments; by the rise of the middle class with a wide and ambitious

<sup>8</sup>Shaw, G. B.: Preface to *BACK TO METHUSELAH*, p. xiv. London, 1921.

sense of its property rights, offset by the social problems of the working class and the slum; by the development of urbanisation, immigration, and education—and by the countless psychological and cultural adjustments to these problems that went on in millions of individuals. Culture and society became terms more than academic, and a History that stressed so convincingly the rôle of the common man owes as much to the common man's emergence as to historical rebellions. The New History had more of the atmosphere of the Chicago Loop than of the liberal classicism of Chicago's University.

## II

It is truer, then, to attribute the New History to the Evolution that was re-interpreting ALL knowledge, and to the material transportation of society that was evolution in practice, than to the host of social studies that thereupon developed. Without this new temper the Older History might have continued to dominate the field. As it was, in the light of the new conception, the story of dynasties and political and military campaigns appeared fragmentary and superficial. Culture, institutions, and the aesthetic became the valid concern of the historian. "Man is more than a warrior, the State is by no means his sole interest," contended J. Harvey Robinson. "He has, through the ages, made voyages, extended commerce, founded cities, established great universities, written books, built cathedrals, painted pictures and sought out many inventions."<sup>9</sup> History was to be enriched and strengthened by a closer proximity to the way man had lived, and it was to take account of his thought and of his customs as well as of his actions.

But if the New History criticised the content of the Old, so too it damned its technique and its method. It asked "why" and "how" as well as "when"; it sought everywhere for causes. The New Historians conceded that the narration of the human story might be an indispensable beginning but that it was only a beginning: it had to be enlightened by interpretation, without which it was barren of pragmatic value and utility. Though they were critical of all historians who adorned a tale, they welcomed into their camp all who sought to point a moral.

<sup>9</sup>Robinson, J. H.: *THE NEW HISTORY*, p. 9.

To this criticism of technique, of the chronological and narrative method of the Older History, patterned into periods and highlighted by a death or a political election, we owe our modern fashion of topical histories. Thus Prof. A. M. Schlesinger in his *NEW VIEWPOINTS IN AMERICAN HISTORY*<sup>7</sup> asserted his radicalism by devoting more than half his chapters to such features as the influence of immigration, geographical factors, economic influences, the decline of aristocracy, the rôle of women, radicalism, and conservatism, economic aspects of the movement for the constitution, and the significance of Jacksonian Democracy. And the rich amalgam of these sectional, geographical, and economic factors became in the hands of Frederick Jackson Turner a potent weapon for re-interpreting the American West and indeed the whole course of American History. The New History speaks with Turner's voice in his Presidential Address to the American Historical Association in 1910: "We must deal with the connections of geography, industrial growth, politics and government. With these, we must take into consideration the changing social composition, the inherited beliefs and the habitual attitude of the mass of the people, the psychology of the nation, its sections and its leaders. We cannot neglect their moral tendencies and ideals. Whatever be the truth of European history, American history is chiefly concerned with social forces, shaping and reshaping under the conditions of a nation changing as it adjusts to its environment."<sup>8</sup>

The combined impetus of the experimental method, evolutionary ideas, and industrial re-organization led to a topical treatment, in terms of sections, areas, and economic and social forces; new fields became the provinces of specialists. Becker, Robinson, and Preserved Smith in America, like Poole and Rashdall in England, brought intellectual history into prominence; Beard and Veblen investigated technology and economics; the political theorists took up legal histories and analyses of the forces behind the massive front of the law—like Duguit, Laski, Maitland, Pollock, Pound, and Holmes; and, both as popularists and prophets, H. G. Wells and Hendrick Van Loon pictured a future Federated World-Order, in magnificent efforts at World History. The New History

<sup>7</sup>New York, 1928.

<sup>8</sup>AMERICAN HISTORICAL REVIEW, Vol. xvi, 1910, p. 225.

fought its noblest battle there, propagandising with a desperate futility for a Democratic Front. It was answered by the September Days of 1939.

### III

The collapse of the avowed ambitions of some of the New Historians is seen most picturesquely on an international scale. How far was that collapse general, and what were the forces that brought it about?

As the causes of its development showed, the New History was not an intellectual revolution, so much as a reflection in historiography of the prevalent climate of opinion: the broad social awareness of the twentieth century. Barnes was doing for History what Dewey was doing for Education, and Commons for Economics, and similar authorities for their own fields: re-writing the past in terms of the present. History can be no more impartial or more abstract than the society in which it is written. As Croce has told us, it can only be contemporary thought about the past, and Beard has re-iterated that its content and subject-matter is, after all, thought about actualities, not the actualities themselves. The twists and turns that our own frames of reference can give to the more or less established facts of the past have pre-occupied historians; that is the reason—or the excuse—for the perpetual re-writing of history, for the use of stereotypes, for the development, in a latter day, of a history of rationalisation and ideology; it prevented Lord Acton trying to write at all, and led him, in a magnificent effort at something tangible, to plan the CAMBRIDGE MODERN HISTORY.

All this granted, it seems strange that the New Historians failed to appreciate that they were, indeed, no better than their predecessors, that they too were far from penning a final story. Their faith in the urgency of the social emphasis prevented their reflecting that within another decade or two the kaleidoscopic changes in life and thought might swing History into some new direction. They tended to have an exaggerated sense of the place of History as a great synthesiser, a province perhaps better occupied by Sociology. The contemporary sense of explaining the present led

<sup>9</sup>Robinson, J. H. and C. A. Beard: *THE DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN EUROPE*, preface, p. v.

them to emphasise the more recent past rather than earlier periods and to neglect those issues which seemed no longer important. Thus Robinson and Beard, in their preface to *THE DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN EUROPE* said: "In preparing the volume in hand the writers have consistently subordinated the past to the present. It has been their ever-conscious aim to enable the reader to catch up with his own times, to read intelligently the foreign news in the morning paper, to know what was the attitude of Leo XIII toward the Social Democrats even if he has forgotten that of Innocent III towards the Albigenses."<sup>10</sup> This, obviously enough, is history with a purpose, bearing all the stigmata of a product of the age of John Dewey. It implies a continuous judgment of the past in the light of the present; it is consciously as well as unconsciously biased; not the past *per se*, but the past as it relates to our present perplexities, that is its objective. Now, without denying the social value of the New History, this remains a partial approach; it substitutes pragmatism and utility for classicism and abandons any attempt to understand and reconstruct the past in and for itself. The New Historians forget that in so far as the past—and the future—differ from the present, they need to be studied as far as possible *sub specie aeternitatis*, and that their contribution to the liberal mind will be in proportion as such differences are appreciated. It is to be doubted if many periods of history can be understood by employing this technique of present references, and such an emphasis gives a false perspective to the human story. Modern history is but a small part of a vaster March of Time.

That this policy held dangers for the historian was realized as early as 1913 by W. A. Dunning, who wrote: "We must recognize frankly that whatever a given age believes to be true is true for that age and people. . . . The business of the historian . . . is to ascertain the scope and content of the ideas that constituted the culture of a period; whether the ideas were true or false, according to the standards of another period, has nothing to do with the matter. That they were the activities that underlay the activities of the area of the time is all that concerns the work of the historian"<sup>10</sup>. We have conceded already the truism that history is

<sup>10</sup>Dunning, W. A.: "Truth in History", in *AMERICAN HISTORICAL REVIEW*, Vol. xix, p. 228.

always unavoidably an interpretation of the past in terms of our present social interests, but to judge it from its present social angle is to be purely empirical, to select the particular rather than to view the whole. It may be sound sociology, but it is inaccurate history.

Some illustration of the danger of this approach can be seen in J. H. Robinson's *THE NEW HISTORY*, when he asks: "Would a sensible historian dream of including the battle of Aegospotami, the Samnite Wars, the siege of Numantia by the Romans, the Italian campaigns of Frederick Barbarossa, the six wives of Henry VII, or the battles of the Thirty Years' War?"<sup>11</sup> Granted that the historian's primary problem is one of omission, it remains that for the contemporary Roman, the wars with the Samnites were almost as significant as the American Civil War was for the contemporary Southerner; that the Italian campaigns of Barbarossa, apart from their indication of the conflict between Emperor and Pope during the twelfth century, prove the close relation between Germany and Italy which characterized the middle ages and which delayed the emergence of nationalism in those countries until the late nineteenth century; and that the six wives of Henry VIII, despite their exaggerated notoriety, did lead to Henry's break with Rome, to the establishment of the Anglican Church and royal supervision over it, and to the not unimportant reign of Queen Elizabeth. These events may have slender meaning for the average man of this progressive democratic epoch, but for the common man of those days they were decisive and world-shaping, and for the historian as significant as anything that the past has to offer. But the New History had, at times, short sympathy with its past.

The prevailing indebtedness of History to the new sciences stimulated the discussion: Was History a Science? Discussion followed discussion on the degree to which the subjective material of History could be reduced to laws, and Edward Cheyney, in his *LAW IN HISTORY*, went so far as to suggest that among historical laws, operating with unfailing and mathematical effect, were 'democracy' and 'moral progress'. This was indeed the *reductio ad absurdum* of a somewhat puerile discussion, for, given the dominance of the immediate, the incalculable and the unpredictable

<sup>11</sup>Robinson, J. H.: *Ibid*, p. 138.

in History, there was little point to an attempt to find such imponderabilia determining the course of human affairs. It would have been easier to say that History is a science in its method and its research, but that it has to be an art in its presentation.

Nor were the pretensions of the New History so original as it supposed. Some two thousand years before, Polybius thought history a guide for statesmen; Bolingbroke, however little he might practise what he preached, defined history as philosophy teaching by examples; Voltaire told Mme. du Chatelet that wars and diplomacy were tedious and inconsequential and that the truly important part of the record was the history of the human mind. Assuming that the peculiar emphases of the New History were the intellectual, the social, and democratic, the New Historians were also apt to minimize their indebtedness to English historians. H. E. Barnes contended that the new attitude had influenced America most of all and Great Britain least<sup>19</sup>; since the American historians have had to deal with a country whose origin began in 'Revolution' and which lacked an aristocracy until but recently, in which the immigrant and the developing West have alike emphasized the dynamite of social change, it is not unnatural that they should have always been healthily contemptuous of the older dynastic history. But it remains to note that the much maligned Macaulay had realised the value of the social story as early as the Americans, and that the avowed prototype of many a New History was J. R. Green's *SHORT HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH PEOPLE*. Lecky and Theodore Merz were writing histories of thought in the latter decades of the nineteenth century, and names like F. S. Marvin, F. W. Maitland, the Webbs, the Hammonds, and the Trevelyan deserve, in strict accuracy, as honourable a mention as the more prolific social historians of America. Indeed, J. R. Green and the recent *OXFORD HISTORY OF ENGLAND*, in 14 volumes, have probably exhibited the interaction of all the complex forces which make a nation what it is, as well as any, and probably a little more successfully than the *AMERICAN LIFE* series has done. The problem is not solved by balancing political histories by exclusively social histories but rather by emphasising the complexity and inter-

<sup>19</sup>Barnes, H. E.: "Recent Developments in History", in *RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES*, ed. by E. C. Hayes, p. 388. New York, 1939.

connectedness of many developments in many fields. That alone approaches what Spengler calls the morphology of history.<sup>18</sup>

It might also be pertinent to inquire to what degree a historian is equipped to be a judge and an assessor of sociological, artistic, and literary tendencies. Just as a historian would hesitate to pronounce a judgment on the Mona Lisa, so he ought to hesitate to be authoritative about social forces and motives. One cannot but feel, for example, that the Beards, despite their learning, are pronouncing little more than lay judgments when they try to essay the culture-content of the films in their *AMERICA IN MIDPASSAGE*. Comparison of the chapter on "Sources of Entertainment" in that book with, let us say, Mortimer Adler's *PRUDENCE AND ART* leaves no doubt as to which volume is the more philosophical and penetrating an analysis of the significance of the film, both as a work of art and as a social instrument.

It is difficult to criticise the New History, because all modern writers of history have been products of it, and its dogmas are accepted as axiomatic. The above assessment is not intended to be a disparagement; the merits of the new approach are obvious—in its enriching and liberalising of the human story, its enhanced practical value, its wider appeal, its recognition of world history, economic history, and intellectual history. These are likely to be a permanent contribution to the corpus of historical knowledge; yet it remains the contention of this article that its merits are broadly contemporary, scientific, and pragmatic, but sociological rather than historical; the merits of an age interested in social problems rather than of an intellectual discipline interested in the pure attainment of the knowledge of the past; its merits and defects are, in short, the merits and defects of democracy.

#### IV

History to-day is no longer "New". It is no longer written, except by accident, as a proof of the workings of a social conscience. Social interests to-day are taken for granted, if not openly derided. History writing to-day, especially in so far as it strives to lose the dead hand of scholasticism and to influence the grow-

<sup>18</sup>Spengler, Oswald: *THE DECLINE OF THE WEST*, Vol. I, p. 5, p. 364. New York, 1939.

ingly literate public, is vitriolic, witty, and impressionistic. A new cynical spirit is abroad. The 'schools' of Lytton Strachey and Emil Ludwig find a new reverence. Attention has been directed expressly to the 'living present', and the newspaper correspondents who are our chief source for the story of the recent past have all, naturally enough, emphasised the dynamics of personality; this is true of John Gunther, Vincent Sheean, and Harold Nicolson. All accounts of modern Germany and Italy and Russia, and only to a lesser degree of England and France, are pre-eminently and unavoidably studies in individual psychology. The same holds even more so of the contemporary diarist, like F. L. Allen. The journalistic historian is writing to sell, and therefore for effect; he uses all the tricks of the literary trade to that end; he becomes an ironic and colorful speculator on the contemporary scene. Whether or not the present struggle for power in Europe produces another wave of cynicism and unrest and dissatisfaction, those characteristics are already at work in contemporary historiography; 'inside information' may not always be cynical, but it generally aims at penetrating the mask of pretense; it is at least coloured by disillusion. All this, with the anecdotal richness of the modern world, and the avowed Philistinism of the modern intellectual, sets a tone for the writer of history, and Van Doren writes his *FRANKLIN* in the light of it. Belloc's book on Richelieu bears the subtitle "The Cardinal Dictator". And William Gerhardi, writing a book on *THE ROMANOVs*, designed to evoke the past as a mirror for the present, says that the professional historians have failed precisely because they have neglected the individual human being. For him "history should weave a tapestry of interest."

One of the best examples of this new attitude is W. E. Woodward, in his biographies on Washington and Grant. In his *A NEW AMERICAN HISTORY*, published in 1936, he says: "In this book the central theme is the development of ideas as expressed in personalities and events. I do not like essays; they are usually static and seldom informative. I like stories; they move; they have color and life. This book is unconventional. The characters and events speak for themselves. I am merely the storyteller."

We are not likely to lose the qualities of variety and width and

stimulus that the New History brought with it. No doubt the social awareness that characterised it will continue to inform history as strongly as the critical scholarship of an earlier day continues to do. But, despite its sociological impetus, the New History was likely to be static and the historical promise, as Woodward tells us, demands dynamism, movement, and vitality. A real science of society, such as that at which it aimed, would imprison us in a materialist predestination as limiting as Calvinist predestination. Darwin's star has waned before the flood of new biological and scientific research. The new watchword is the relativity of all abstract schemes to the conditions of the age in which they are produced. History is increasingly critical, too, of the "chain-of-causation" idea long dominant in physics; it protests against importing into history the idea of the organism borrowed from biology. Since it denies cause and effect, it emphasises condition, and the idea of accident. Thus H. A. L. Fisher, in the preface to his *HISTORY OF EUROPE*, 1936, gives only one brief reference to any claim to a philosophy of history. "I can see only one emergency following upon another as wave follows wave, only the great fact with respect to which, since it is unique, there can be no generalisations, only one safe rule for the historian: that he should recognize in the development of human destinies the play of the contingent and the unforeseen."<sup>14</sup> By thus casting away determinism, the role of personality is restored to history. And, above all, there is a suspicion of theories, for they are so often demonstrated to be but ideologies; i.e., rationalisations of self-interest; they are apt to be merely the order we impose on chaos, the better to understand it.

The modern historian, working against a broad social background and in a popular and arresting fashion—relics of the New History—is attentive pre-eminently to two factors: to the rôle of the individual and his psychological interpretation, as in C. Vann Woodward's splendid *TOM WATSON: AGRARIAN REBEL*, and to the power of the state. Laski, Strachey, and McIver in their recent books have all emphasized that the essence of the state is power. And John Chamberlain in his recent *AMERICAN STAKES* has reminded us that the government is only a fulcrum, which

<sup>14</sup>Fisher, H. A. L.: *A HISTORY OF EUROPE*, preface, p. v. London, 1936.

the dominant group bends to its purpose. But then is it not true that our historians and political philosophers are merely reflecting the grim immediates of our own day, and that in thought and practice we acknowledge a new Machiavelli?

*by S. Raiziss*

### FLIGHT

Infinite planes sustain the bird  
For fluencies, for short caprice;  
And where the long heavens grade  
Wings and the wind have covenants.

Such diagrams are solved in dreams  
Occult with parallels released,  
Parabolas and mystic tangents,  
Serious with planes and schemes.

Abandoned down the birdways  
Men still study dying days  
Among the fishes' facile rooms,  
Among the woods where wrecks festoon

The complex branch; dismissing soon  
Such jealous rumors of lost man  
Among the snow the swamp the sand  
Time's mouth has more to say.

Sons of Daedalus rewrite  
With blood the ghostly charts,  
The interlinear text and arts  
Of air and birds' most secret sight.

by L. Robert Lind

## THAT NERO AND THEM OTHER GREEKS<sup>1</sup>

THE death-knell of the classics has been sounding for a hundred years. While the Industrial Revolution was turning England into a huge factory, men were already questioning, with an impatience born of Comte and capitalism, the methods and values of a classical education. The urbane and witty Sidney Smith, pallid from a youthful ordeal of Latin verse writing, complained of too much Latin and Greek. Alien tides were stirring beneath the foundations of British learning. Huxley and Arnold led opposing forces into the epic contest between the Sciences and Litterae Humaniores. In America, the classics, which, with mathematics and the forensic arts, had held the upper hand, began to feel the strain. Voices from the farm and the factory outside the college windows now echoed in the very classroom. By the nineties the classics in Britain and America had become apologetic; the streamlining of Greek and Latin grammars to meet the requirements of a dwindling clientèle was a signal of defeat. The elective system in the curriculum, the mushroom expansion of science, social and natural, vocationalism, and the stern imperatives of a business civilization had done their work before the first World War gave the classics their *coup de grâce*. The professional educators were shortly to leap up and down upon a corpse.

But the report of their extinction was curiously premature. Every college of importance continued to support a set of hold-overs from the Renaissance who called themselves teachers of the classics; even now the language most widely taught in the high schools is Latin. The bludgeonings of circumstance and the needs of the "new order" have left a residuum of interest in the classics among a few brave students. Although they have taken

<sup>1</sup>The title is appropriated from a remark, overheard in an American 'bus, by a citizen who democratically expressed his opinions on the value of classical culture.

on the protective coloration of "socialization", "functionalism", and "motivation", the classics still hold a diminished but determined garrison against the jeers of those who accuse them of a "cultural lag".

Not that all danger has passed. The attack upon the classics has simply been extended along a wider front which now includes the modern languages, mathematics, philosophy, and even the social sciences. The classics have allies; among them will soon be numbered all the humane studies in the curriculum.

Thus the outlook is actually less depressing than it seems. The classics have existed for more than two thousand years as school subjects; but if they go, they will take with them much that is good out of the liberal arts college. Who knows? Even Fascism may tolerate them if it comes this way; the plausible argument has been made that the theories of Nazism and Marxism stem directly from Plato via Machiavelli and Hegel. Though the totalitarian mentality is always ready to destroy the best elements of civilization, it may be for once sentimental enough to hold its hand from the classics. They still exist in Germany and Italy.

While the situation remains at this precarious point, the American classicist has had opportunity to recognize the dilemma, or the dilemmas, between whose horns he stands. First, what shall he teach: the classics, or something about the classics? It has long been an unsolved question just who and how many can profit from a study of the classics. So exclusively mature are they in their content and point of view that only the student who can read them consistently for more than two years can begin to demonstrate a proper understanding of them. But the largest public for the classics today is made up of high school children, by definition, minds of the most immature sort. Most of them drop Latin (since Greek is already the preserve of a small circle in the colleges and universities) after a year or two. What they retain from their study is uncertain: something of English derivatives, a vague inkling of classical style and rhetoric, the memory of a few names, Caesar, Cicero, perhaps Vergil. All this does no harm, of course; they are distinctly the better for their brief exposure to the humanistic tradition, violently foreshortened and simplified by restrictions of time, more practical needs, and the adverse pressure of parents, principals, and pocketbooks.

To meet this particular dilemma the classicist has, again paradoxically, undertaken to "humanize" the classics! He has fallen back upon the stratagem which has been the chief stock in trade of his colleague, the social scientist. Instead of teaching the actual writings of the great political or social figures of history, he has taught something about them, strained carefully through the sieve of textbooks and background lectures. Instead of reading *The Federalist Papers*, the student reads books about Alexander Hamilton; instead of Ricardo, Smith, or Marx, the student reads histories of economic theory. The same movement has set in with mathematics; special courses now being offered are adapted for the great horde of high school and college students who will never pursue the subject beyond solid geometry. Even the haughty scientist is stooping to attract followers by way of painless non-laboratory courses in popular science.

The classicist has accordingly turned to subjects like The Greek Heritage, Roman Civilization, The Classics in Translation, The Greek in English, Latin for Scientists, and is almost about to teach the classics by means of the talking film. But in his conscience a small voice has been speaking; it is the *daimonion* of Socrates in a modern setting. The classicist knows that Greek and Latin cannot be genuinely taught merely in their applications and externals. If that were the case, there would no longer be any need for an exact knowledge of the classical languages, and his colleagues in English or the social sciences might as capably carry on the dissemination of information about the classics. In fact, they do. The number of these courses now given in other departments than the Greek and Latin department which poach directly upon the classicist's ancient preserve is increasing steadily—first, because they lend a cachet of comprehensive culture to the department's offerings, and second, because the classicist sometimes refuses to give them.

What, then, of Greek and Latin? Where do they fit into a changing and "dynamic" educational scene? As linguistic archaeology? pure philology? as technical courses? or are they to rank at last with Sanskrit as really dead languages?

This is a possibility which the classicist cannot help facing. Enrollment figures alone are everywhere regarded as the criterion of value for any particular subject; majority rule is still a demo-

cratic rule even if it purges the world's oldest discipline of culture from the school catalogue. The will of the greatest number must be done, no matter how little that number realizes what it is doing.

This dilemma entails another. Given the conditions which may soon determine entirely the selection of instructional material in classics what shall the classicist undertake as research? Shall it be closely related to his teaching or, following the present mode, only remotely related to it? Research in the classics has had little unified direction or coordination; it has drifted with the interests of the individual as research in the humanities as a whole has done. There has been a lack of dominant schools of thought in research. This arises from the fact that the German-trained scholars of the previous generation have dropped away by retirement or death; their sobering influence on younger scholars has begun to disappear and with it the individual traditions they brought with them from Europe. Faithful to the precepts of their masters—Wölfflin, Traube, Wilamowitz, or Wissowa—they once carried on studies in Latin palaeography or lexicography, Greek history or Roman religion, comparable to much of the best research in classical philology elsewhere in the world. But they formed no schools, no extensive followings. Gildersleeve, Shorey, and others of their standing have left no spiritual progeny to carry on their work. The German method of scholarship is at its end in America; and the British have never had any method to teach us. What can be learned from them is primarily an inimitable English style that never sinks beneath the weight of facts.

But miscellaneous research, however good, will not hold students except in the graduate school, where more PH.D's in classics are being produced in proportion to classical staffs and enrollments than can find jobs. There are, nevertheless, types of research which seem more suited to the needs of the profession at present than some of those practiced in the past. The history of ideas, exclusively the province of Greek and Roman culture, is one hardly touched by American classicists. True, there are a few young scholars who are doing excellent work in Greek philosophy; but it is rather, as with the British who write so interminably on the subject, a study of the interrelations of Greek thought among Greek thinkers themselves than an analysis of its impact

upon modern thought. It thus remains sealed from the view of any save a small group of specialists. Ancient rhetoric and literary theory, in which the Greeks and Romans produced one of their most significant contributions, is still treated as a set of rules exemplified by the actual texts, where their incidences are duly noted in the school editions but their importance for the stylistically illiterate youth of our schools is ignored. The founding fathers of America did not ignore it; hence, none of our current politicians can write like even the most obscure signer of the Declaration of Independence. The aesthetics of Greek and Roman literature, to say nothing of their art, is still more or less a closed book; its moral aspect continues to overshadow other elements. Yet the moral force of Greek education as illustrated in Greek literature has been described on anything approaching a popular though reasonably comprehensive scale in only one book, by a German scholar now a resident of the United States.

The function of instruction and research in the classics is clearly historical and evolutionary; their only feasible approach today is linked firmly with the evidences of Greek and Roman culture within our own. This does not imply a mixture of routine influence-hunting plus a reiteration of the obvious. It means, rather, an increased and enlightened emphasis upon what is valuable *for us* in the classical heritage. This is not always or even usually what it has been supposed to be, a set of parallels of thought and action arising from the fundamental unity of human nature. It is the deep and essential variation from our manner of thought and behavior which really interests the student of our time—the reason why Greek tragedy, for example, is not synonymous with modern or Shakespearean tragedy; why Greek and Roman views of economic life differ so widely from our own, or why a traditional elevation of the state above the individual could yet allow and encourage a manifold variety of personal expression in Greece and Rome, which is the continual wonder of succeeding ages, when the adoration of the state in modern Europe has stifled expression of every sort.

The classical books themselves are not yet read as they should be, both with the sound understanding of their place in their own

time and a perception of their meaning in our own.<sup>1</sup> It is doubtful whether a few "great book" courses, like the one which a metaphysician and a university president teach at Chicago, can fully accomplish their purpose without some knowledge on the part of the student of the fundamentals of style and language, of humanistic background and tradition. The attempt must always have something meretricious, in the ladies' club manner, about it. Certainly the projected metaphysics of mutual understanding which is to form the common basis of culture, rescued at last from hackneyed translations, has little chance to arise when its fundamental concepts in the classical books must be divined through the awkward circumlocutions of even the best English versions. Nine-tenths of the books which now profess to explain the classics are too unrealistic to do more than confuse the reader. What can untranslatable words like *virtus*, *religio*, *pietas*, *sophrosyné*, *hubris*, *ananké*, *até*, *aidos*, *paideia*, *kalokagathia* possibly convey to a student who is unable to trace their significance through at least a few Greek and Latin texts?<sup>2</sup> What T. S. Eliot has written about the teaching of philosophy<sup>3</sup> is equally applicable to literature, no matter how skillfully publicized may be the process by which it is administered. The classics in America have

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Harold Stearns, *THE STREET I KNOW*; New York: Lee Furman, Inc., (1935), p. 52: "And oddly enough I actually enjoyed studying Caesar; I remember I was very proud indeed when Gilpatrick [his high school principal] said to me in front of the class, 'Why, Mr. Stearns, you read that passage almost as a Roman would do it'. But I wish there had been a closer connection between history and my first Latin reading—as it was, it was an exercise in abstractions. . . ." p. 53: ". . . history was one thing, Latin was another—only rarely did it come to you in a sort of flash that the people whose words you were reading were also the people who had made history. However, I enjoyed these abstractions, and I got some sense of the rhythm of classical tongues. Also, of their logic, which I regard as important: call me old-fashioned, I still do today. I noticed that the boys who were good in Latin were usually good in Algebra, and even then I had a sort of intuition of the reason—that your logical apparatus, or whatever one wanted to call it, was involved in both scholastic disciplines." p. 55: "(In fact, I am now sorry I didn't take Greek, when I had the opportunity.)"

<sup>2</sup>A. N. Whitehead, *THE AIMS OF EDUCATION AND OTHER ESSAYS*; New York: Macmillan (1929), p. 115: "When you come to think of it, the whole claim of the importance of classics rests on the basis that there is no substitute for first-hand knowledge."

<sup>3</sup>T. S. Eliot, "Second Thoughts About Humanism"; *HOUND AND HORN*, II, No. 4, 1929, p. 344, note 2: "The teaching of philosophy to young men who have no background of humanistic education, the teaching of Plato and Aristotle to youths who know no Greek and are completely ignorant of ancient history, is one of the tragic farces of American education. We reap the whirlwind of pragmatists, behaviourists etc."

not failed; they have simply not yet been tried. And this is part of the classicist's dilemma; he must solve it himself and thus for American culture—before he is given his hat and politely shown the door.

*by S. Raiziss*

### DESTRUCTION

Not only man so serves his kind with death:  
Nature with divided tongue and scarlet breath  
Makes war on mountains, raves among the trees  
Whose mute stand defames indignity.

When arson flays the clouded bark  
To something more than black and stark  
And swallows every look of green  
And cramps the stubborn needles brown,

Now obelisks accuse with keen  
Hieroglyphs of ruin:  
Stand too long before their dust is down.  
Before such dust disperses memories,  
What youngest leaf will not have known  
Red history of trees?

by John St. Edmunds

## THE SONGS OF ERNST BACON

THESE are artists who can be said more properly to capture than to delight. In becoming familiar with such an artist's work one is aware that the appeal is not alone to the conscious mind;—the qualities of the work seep and, as it were, are absorbed into the very fibers of the brain. No matter how vigilantly critical a man may be in the presence of most other creative natures, he will find himself when confronted with one of these 'capturing' artists to be in a world beyond reason, to which he is fundamentally too responsive to think; he can only feel. To me, Charles Doughty, the author of the *Arabia Deserta*, is one of these artists. In a paper he wrote on Arabia forty years after that book appeared, there is this passage:

Under a perpetual grey more than blue heaven her immense upland is seen everywhere as a parched and bald tree-less landscape which, to unwonted eyes, seems to be nearly without herbage. Rain rarely falls and that is always partial. Her drought and barrenness nourishes few wild creatures; on man's pate beats all day a blazing sun, and seldom is there relief of any overshadowing cloud. Her vast land-breaths are not wet with the dew of Heaven. . . . It is a weary upland "which eateth up its inhabitants" . . . a seared wasteful wilderness, full of fear, where everyman's hand is ready against another; a lean wild grit and dust stiffened with everlasting drought.

Such an artist is compulsive—the dozens of irregularities in phrasing, the long sinuous and strange movement one accepts for no reason—but only because of the unanalyzable quality of genius that pervades the thing. It is not the power of the master intellect—and that is the point; it is rather the genius of feeling.

The songs of Ernst Bacon are of that other world too. They spring out of a nature somewhat akin to Doughty's—a nature infinitely quiet and assured. The long powerful melodic lines of this music move unpredictably but with their own cogent logic

out of a source profoundly different from any other one has ever known. A sparseness in writing that, with familiarity, becomes increasingly wonderful, and an ever-present sense of strangeness—never exaggerated, hardly ever quite tangible—pervades this music.

In common with the author of the *Arabia Deserta*, Ernst Bacon achieves in these songs a lovely effortless grandeur. One is aware constantly of a certain hugeness—all the more impressive as many of the songs are of only twenty or twenty-five measures in length—and are written with so very few notes. The grandeur is essentially of imagination, of phrases that seem to glide out of the very heavens easily and quietly. There is fullness without noise and a vitality that never fails even in the slowest movements. Perhaps it is his knowledge of syncopation that does most to keep his rhythms alive. Everywhere in his songs one finds the normal beats displaced; and yet it is all managed with so little trouble one hardly recognizes it as syncopation.

Again, the counterpoint is so pervasive, so full of variety, that the pulse is at no time in danger of failing. All the contrapuntal parts are full of direction; they have shape; they can be sounded without the other voices and still make articulate lines. They are of very different lengths; sometimes of only a few notes, sometimes extending throughout an entire song.

The counterpoint justifies, as nothing else can, the use of dissonance. There are striking clashes in almost every song, but never a clash for the sake of color; only and always for the sake of line. His use of seconds major and minor is particularly characteristic. Dissonances occurring constantly and always with the force of conflicting motions give his work substantial hardness, especially as he avoids over-harmonization as the plague. It is the music of the modern world, not because it deals with the stage properties—machines, factories, class struggle—but because it is tough and clean and gaunt. It is a positive music, utterly unpretentious. Tenderness without a suggestion of sentimentality is uncommon among living musicians, and almost unknown among modern song writers. This strange combination of tenderness and virility is to be encountered as often in these songs as easy grandeur and sparseness.

The songs for the most part are settings of Emily Dickinson,

a writer who was ever on the alert for the out-of-the-way, and who was wary always to find out the shortest way to express her ideas. Many of Bacon's settings have the same fundamental brevity. They begin often enough without even a measure's introduction by the piano. But between stanzas of a single poem there are sometimes wonderful little perorations on what has been said by the poet,—a practice which was followed to great effect by Schumann and Wolf.

Doughty used an English which was based on a lifetime devoted to the study of Chaucer and Spenser. But his language is not artificial or obsolete because he has a natural feeling for what he recognized as the greatest tradition in our literature. Bacon has found a vehicle of expression which is directly based on a long and thorough schooling in sixteenth century counterpoint. But he is a self-willed artist and the technique bends in every measure to his creative power. The dissonances are encountered in so bald a fashion that one recognizes immediately the hand of a unique musician.

Both Doughty and Bacon are modern because of their toughness; but that is only to say they are sincere artists: they are modern only in the sense that all fine artists are modern—they speak a living tongue.

The songs more particularly have a specific appeal for us because in this present-day world of hatred and bloodshed we feel a compelling need for what is plain. This music is forthright and unadorned: it provides us with certainties in the midst of a world of uncertainties. It is more direct and therefore more urgently needed, I feel, than the songs of any other artist now living.

*by Ernst Bacon*

## POETRY IN SEARCH OF MUSIC

I HAVE long been of the opinion that poetry is the basis of musical melody: and that many of the greatest changes in musical style have resulted from the need to give musical expression to types of language, whether poetry or drama, hitherto unused. This does not say that the invention of new musical instruments and the technical rearrangement of any of music's elements, through conscious processes of the mind, have not played their part in evolving new idioms of expression. But deeper than all these lie the processes of speech; the breath, the inflection, the accent, the nuances and length of syllables, the phrasing. A new music arose from the introduction of the German language into the Protestant church service. The Italian theatre, when it introduced song, produced something unique in music. Equally important may be the changes taking place as the English language finds its way more and more into our own American music.

American poetry is rich in lyric substance. The late poems of Walt Whitman have a repose and nobility measureable with Goethe. Emily Dickinson's amazingly succinct and original short stanzas seem often to surpass in their mysterious way anything in the English language—not excluding Donne, Blake, and even Shakespeare. Emerson's profound lines are due for a wide recognition. The New England poets, Whittier, Longfellow, and Bryant, have not begun to be exhausted for musical material. The women poets of recent years, Sara Teasdale, Elinor Wylie, and Edna St. Vincent Millay, have each in her own way branched out from that strong central trunk of Emily's poetry. Today the massive, rough chants of Carl Sandburg await a well-nigh heroic musical declamation.

There are certain kinds of poetry that are better without music. One thinks immediately of intellectual poetry where the thought has not achieved a primarily lyric expression, and on the other hand of poetry that is in itself so musical that the addition of tones

would merely detract from its own most essential quality. Browning at times seems to me of the first sort, and of the second I am convinced Poe is the salient example. Lanier could also be mentioned with Poe. To write music to "The Raven" or to "The Bells" would seem to be gilding, or better whitewashing, the lily.

Poetry which possesses a certain philosophical undercurrent together with a relatively simple and not-too-involved lyricism has attracted me most of all in the writing of songs. For this reason, and having been nourished early on the songs of Schubert, Brahms, and Schumann, I first became attracted to Goethe. It was some time before I discovered how English and American poetry could be sung. The study of the English madrigalists, of the music of Purcell and John Gay, was not common at the time of my early attempts in song writing. Strangely enough, the innocent simplicity of R. L. Stevenson's verse first attracted me to the use of my own language.

After studying abroad in Vienna for some time during years when Europe's present catastrophe was foreseen only by the toughest of dreamers, I returned to the United States to find an occupation in music. All the brashest elements of that zooming, speculating, ballyhooing period struck me in full. It was then that the sure philosophy of democracy of Walt Whitman began to have meaning for me, and I turned to the use of the more lyric of his writings that are to be found in "Sands at Seventy", "Songs at Parting", and other of those late poems that seem to be less known. The western poet, Sarah Bard Field, first made me aware of the genius of Emily Dickinson (the anthologies are forever selecting the weakest of her poems). After that, I decided to stay entirely with American poetry, although I have more recently turned back to Herrick, Shakespeare, Shelley, and even to some translations from the Chinese by Waley.

While song writing may be the most personal work I have done (since there are so few musicians today who are not completely immersed in the instrumental current), I have occupied myself considerably with orchestral and choral writing: two symphonies, an oratorio, smaller suites, orchestral songs, and considerable compositions for two pianos—and am now turning to chamber music. The interpretation of the classics has interested me profoundly, as conductor, pianist, and ensemble player, and I am one of the

very few musicians who adore teaching (if not overdone). Unfortunately, being an all-round musical athlete does not advance one in a career nearly as much as though one were to announce oneself as a specialist—for instance in musical hammer-throwing, or fancy diving. And yet past history reveals that those who accomplished the most were usually performers, writers, conductors, teachers, all together.

America's musical world is as yet only partly opened to Americans. The field of symphony orchestra, opera, the concert stage, and even publishing, are still dominated by representatives of an era that regarded the United States as chiefly an audience. As to the successes my compositions have enjoyed I could say that modesty forbids a recital of the many celebrated persons who have rejected my work.

*by S. Raziss*

### BIRDS OF NO FEATHER

On the utmost pipe of organ cactus  
The giant buzzard blackly perches:  
Fruit of lust elects a becoming tree.  
With dark imbalance the buzzard lurches,  
Quiet and heavy as death drops down to see.

Among the barnyard brilliant with feathers  
Entertaining his low estate,  
Enormous and still the bird will wait.  
The garrulous fowl accept his kind for kin:  
No foolish heart perturbs at the alien presence,  
The eyes are shrewd for only grain.

Their death prepares his lessons  
With intimate contempt by day  
And studies pickings for tomorrow's prey.

*by Henry W. Wells*

HUMBERT WOLFE:  
A MODERN ENGLISH HEINE

ON January fifth of the year 1940 Humbert Wolfe, poet, essayist, and economist, died in London on his fifty-fifth birthday of an illness which friend and physician alike might describe as exhaustion of the heart. For over thirty years he had been employed in the British Civil Service. If his death were tragically occasioned, it was not, when personally considered, unhappily timed for one so sensitive to the misfortunes of Europe. Yet it is probable that with a longer life he would have enriched English literature in steadily increasing measure. Born in Milan of Jewish parents (his mother's family coming from Hamburg), Umberto Wolfe was taken as an infant to England and, except for the customary travels, lived there the rest of his life. His school days he has recalled in his autobiographical sketch, *NOW A STRANGER*, his experiences at Cambridge in a similar volume, *THIS UPWARD ANGUISH*. Literary life began for him in earnest immediately after the war of 1914-1918. During the next two decades he produced twenty-five volumes of verse and about half as many of prose. Unquestionably he will be chiefly remembered as a poet.

Wolfe was a poor caretaker of his own very considerable talents. Although well known in London literary life and at least frequently mentioned in America, he could easily have managed his career to the greater advantage of his reputation. During his early years of authorship he persisted in writing volumes in a fairly effective but outmoded style, so that the general public was much less interested than it should have been in his best and truly original work when it appeared. He would have done well to have kept half his books in manuscript. Readers came to think of him as an author of conservative and fragile lyrics, whereas his genius proved in the end to lie chiefly in long poems of a distinctly individual, robust, and modern idiom. His volumes were clearly

of the most unequal merit. In his lavish and unpruned plantation the lesser crowded the greater and with their unkempt underbrush detracted attention from the half-dozen really impressive trees.

Moreover Wolfe did almost everything which an author can do to turn critical opinion against him, proving quite as much a victim of himself as of unfriendly reviews. Most of his poetry, especially before 1930, fell under the disfavor and even the ridicule of a close phalanx of redoubtable and doctrinaire critics better trained to advertise their own modernities than to retain a catholic and judicial view of literature. Wolfe rashly accepted their challenge. He had himself from the very beginning, just too much modernity to please the conservatives and just too much traditionalism to satisfy the radicals, thus occupying the dangerous position of being a party to himself. The dice are inevitably loaded against such an author. He further became vulnerable on one side by the sharpness of his satire in verse and on the other by the dullness of his criticism in prose. His *LAMPOONS*, addressed chiefly to the English literary world, is a volume of as witty satirical quatrains as may anywhere be found. Many who came within his actual or possible scope with a natural human weakness overlooked the comparative good humor beneath his keen comments and unjustly feared him as a waspish neighbor. As Wolfe's essays on English and French literary history show, he could write discerningly on topics of the past. His criticism diminished in value as it approached his own times. Wolfe committed the unpardonable mistake of failing to appreciate whatever charms may lie in *THE WASTELAND*. He began his critical career by crossing swords with Mr. Chesterton and ended it by dissenting from almost everybody else. The radicals unhappily selected him to be their scape-goat. As a poet he is, I think, at his best but little if at all inferior to Mr. Eliot, but as apologist for his own verse or a critic of the work of his rivals he is relatively weak. That he lacked such skill is apparent in his reluctance to analyze his own work in his study, in his failure to withhold some of his own poems from publication and to sharpen and polish others. Wolfe's worst enemy died with Wolfe; now that he is dead it is timely for an impartial criticism to do him justice.

He flourished not only between two wars but between two worlds. While he reiterated his belief that poetry expresses life, he too frequently overlooked the failure of his own romantic verse to come to close grips with it. Wolfe did at times possess the gift to express life; and life for the poet is always and inevitably a contemporary one. The poet's own experiences and those of his first readers must be the groundwork of any success which may make his art a true legacy. By living in the present the poet lives for the future. It is true that in a few cases Wolfe wilfully fell short of the best ideals of poetry by being too contemporaneous. Thus his slight volume, *A B C OF THE THEATRE*, is chiefly built on ephemeral references to the London stage. But if much of his success is to be attributed to his wide and cosmopolitan literary training, the bulk of his faults derive from the same source. Wolfe at his worst affords a perspicuous example of the vicious derivativeness of much English poetry during the last generation. The Americans have as a rule other and equally dangerous faults; the supreme British vice has been to be overcultivated to the point of decadence. Wolfe had both his propitious and his unlucky masters. His discipline which he derived as a reader and translator of the Greek Anthology proved of much advantage to him in his original verse. But Goethe, Heine, Shelley, Swinburne, and Hugo were mixed blessings. Especially during the early years of his authorship he neglected to recognize how much faded—like Turner's oils—some of the brightest colors of nineteenth-century romantic verse became when applied to a modern canvas and how increasingly glaring become the romantic faults. A few of Wolfe's lyrics are admittedly mere shadows of Tennyson and Swinburne.

The formula is a simple one. Wolfe failed when he persisted in being largely if not wholly literary. When, however, this scholar-poet had something to say, he rose to the occasion and proved to be the very man to say it. Of course when Wolfe translates *Meleager*, it may be held that ultimately it is *Meleager* and not Wolfe who has an experience to express. But the English poet was at times stirred deeply by life in him and about him. One source of his inequalities is explained by his own personality. On the whole he proved happier in objective than in subjective poetry.

There is little evidence that his own personal feelings toward individual men or women stirred him directly to his best verse. But he was dramatically minded enough to realize the feelings of other individuals and, above all, the communal problems of modern society, and to bring both to the fullness of poetic utterance. So the racial prejudice, physical brutality, and political and military menace of Nazi Germany profoundly effected him upon his visit to that country not long after Hitler came to power. This experience produced in *X AT OBERAMMERGAU* his finest serious poetry and in *DON J. EWAN* his most satirical verse. Much as he loved Kensington Gardens and the English country-side, by objectifying his outlook travel significantly enriched his art. England too often became for him the romantic poet's paradise of a soft and maternal landscape. It left him content with his trees and flowers and lambs. His visits to America, France, and Germany, on the contrary, led him to think less of the charms of landscape (these regions being in varying degrees less highly groomed than England) and to write more of men and women, especially in their sociological relationships.

Wolfe possessed one amiable quality rendering him attractive to his friends but unimpressive to his more serious-minded critics. Like many who write fluently, he took his writing none too seriously. If one book was damned, what of that? He had a score of others close at hand. His excessive love for both reading and writing lyrics helped to develop his affection for the lighter forms of verse and to lead his critics unjustly to suppose him incapable of deep seriousness. Pastoralist, satirist, and humorist met in Wolfe. His *HUMORESQUE* is inspired by Pierrot and Pierrette, by the wittiest epigrams in the Greek Anthology, by the minor poems of Heine and the muted, artificial music of Debussy. Both his satirical and his fanciful trifles owe much to the Anthology aided also by the Augustan and Romantic traditions of occasional verse. At the present time his slight books are unhappily as well remembered as his major ones. His first popular success, *KENSINGTON GARDENS*, is written largely in that dubious style midway between a book for adults and for children. It is chiefly about children and presumably for adults. In any case, adults are probably the only ones to enjoy it. His *CURSORY RHYMES*

is a similar but much less notable collection, nearer to the juvenile, insipid rather than naïve and, I venture to think, entirely pleasing neither to man nor child. Wolfe, of course viewed all such work as slight; but even so, he thought it printable. He remains avowedly more the versifier than the poet in his witty *LAMPOONS*, in his trifling *A B C OF THE THEATRE*, in his brief collection of poems on insects, *WINGS AND STINGS*, and elsewhere. Unfortunately most of his lighter booklets appeared before his mature and most impressive volumes. To conclude, Wolfe did almost everything in his power to make his public take him lightly and to discount his really high gifts in serious and sustained verse. Strange, too, that a writer should have at the same time so strong an itch for the microscopic and the endurance for powerful flights. One is reminded that the author of the *AENEID* was long considered the author of a poem on a gnat. Wolfe's facility proved equal to virtually anything, long or short; good, bad, or indifferent.

It is possible that the present war will defeat what would otherwise have been likely enough to appear—a collected edition of Wolfe's work. Some American student will undoubtedly write a dissertation on him which, also beyond a doubt, no one will read. A critical biography seems at present too much to expect. Under these circumstances some concise summing-up becomes desirable, especially because no adequate summary has thus far appeared and, for reasons already indicated, Wolfe has come to deserve more credit than his first critics saw fit to give him. Certain of his volumes are in America even hard to come by. The remainder of this article will accordingly be devoted to a more detailed commentary from the general point of view already given. Inasmuch as few modern poets have written more strong lines or coined more such phrases, quotation to his advantage might easily be made. But since the luxury of quotation would necessarily consume space and the subject is already large, I shall refrain from it.

## II

Numerous as Wolfe's volumes of verse are, they fall readily under a few general heads. His best work lies in his longer poems, usually of a distinctly original and ingenious conception. Eminent

through the purity of their art are his translations from the Greek. Next in descending order of worth are his collections of serious lyrics, his minor satires, his avowed fantasies or trifles and his verse for children. Although Wolfe unquestionably matured as an artist, reaching the height of his career at the age of fifty, the chronology of his works means less than their literary species.

The longest and most rewarding of his poems were published over a period of ten years: *REQUIEM* (1927); *THE UNCELESTIAL CITY* (1930); *REVERIE OF POLICEMAN* (1933); *X AT OBERAMMERGAU* (1935) and *DON J. EWAN* (1937). These volumes are utterly unlike such an avowedly ephemeral trifle as *A B C OF THE THEATRE* or such languidly sentimental books as *THE UNKNOWN GODDESS* and *THIS BLIND ROSE*. His most moving love lyrics and short, conventional pieces are in his earliest publications, later collected in 1931 under the title, *EARLY POEMS*. With advancing years he became more adroit as a metrist, more ingenious as an imagist and facile almost to glibness, but never in his lesser poems more valid as a poet. The longer, it seemed, he cultivated his lyrical garden, the more his flowers resembled crisp and colorful fragments of paper. One feels that the technique is barren because the heart or inspiration is lacking. In other words, Wolfe's facility led him to write more frequently than he had a legitimate subject to write on. By a musical analogy, he may be imagined as publishing as original compositions brief technical studies merely of use to himself. As he matured he came to excel in two opposite extremes: in witty epigrams and major efforts. For a wit really talented at trifles, he possessed a surprising gift for composition at the same time on a large canvas and in a deeply serious vein. Of the five long poems just mentioned all but one are composed on a formula with which Wolfe was especially happy: a fusion of short and often lyrical pieces into a large unit. If composition may be regarded as technique, then this power in welding shorter poems into longer ones must be regarded as Wolfe's most characteristic technical achievement.

The limitations as well as the lesser merits of the lyrical volumes produced in his mid-career are indicated by the conventionality of their subject matter and imagery. It is true that Wolfe possessed a romantic sensitivity rendering him capable of writing

with varying degrees of effectiveness on familiar aspects of love, light, and life. It is still truer that this sensitivity enabled him to write with a delicacy, an enthusiasm and an idealism on the familiar aspects of nature—sea and air, flowers and trees—as few poets of his disillusioned generation succeeded in doing. Many of his happier lyrics have a refreshing dignity and serene assurance utterly unlike the distraught pages of typical post-war verse. His controlled and yet affectionate views of love and nature at times even succeed in piercing behind the thought of his favorite romantic authors to the classical poets whom he knew even more intimately. But most of his lyrics betray the defect so commonly discerned in lyrical verse: a lack of independent thought and fresh feeling. In his longer poems he drastically remedied these defects by finding a happier medium for the cultivation of his very considerable intellectual and creative powers.

Throughout *REQUIEM*, his first really important work, Wolfe maintains a genuinely religious ardor. As in all his most serious long poems, Christianity and romanticism divide the honors in the profuse imagery; Christ and the Virgin appearing amidst the romantic symbols from nature, Alpine mountains, sun and moon, roses, daffodils and waves. Thus the sweeping gesture of charity in *REQUIEM* which stresses the goodness of the wicked and the wickedness of the good, like Calvinism, has its roots in medieval Christianity: while in its breadth Wolfe departs from the main stem of Christian ethical thinking in the direction of romanticism itself. Similarly romantic humanitarianism appears in the latent distrust of capital punishment shown in *THE UNCELESTIAL CITY* and in the dread of force evinced in *X AT OBERAMMERGAU*. In its bitter self-chastisement and idealistic aspiration, and, paradoxically, in charity, forgiveness, and humanity, *REQUIEM* proves a genuine creation of religious spirituality. And its eloquence, though florid, is as a rule unquestionably valid. Wolfe unites Arnold's seriousness with Swinburne's rhetoric. His latinized eloquence reminds the reader especially of a poet whom he held in the greatest veneration, Victor Hugo. There is even an ennobling touch of Dante in *REQUIEM*: like the *VITA NUOVA* this is a sober sequence of lyrics, some odes and some sonnets, and like the *DIVINE COMEDY*, it becomes a solemn confessional of souls faced by the dire ex-

agency of death. Thus in spite of its palpable romanticism *REQUIEM* proves a major work. By it Wolfe as a poet gained his warmest acclaim; but its ultra-romantic style and vague idealism render it less attractive today than the four long poems which he wrote later.

In *THE UNCELESTIAL CITY* he adds to the romantic idealism of *REQUIEM* the racy satire and sharp irony for which he exhibited some taste in his very earliest publications. The poem is a gigantic confession (262 pages) of Judge John Crayfish. This typical British jurist recounts his life, or has it recounted for him, from his birth to his last years. The life is treated in a highly free and episodic fashion. Wolfe's book falls into chapters depicting the man's birth and sound Oxford education, his early love affair, his thoughts as lawyer in the trial of a prostitute and his work as judge in trials for blasphemy (British for journalistic license) and murder. Each major section is prefaced by a few sentences in prose to clarify what might otherwise be an obscure action. The individual poems vary from pure lyrics to bold satires. Many of the finest songs are assigned to a "fiddler" who supplies a choral commentary resembling, on a much reduced scale, the lyrical choruses of the *Spirits in Hardy's DYNASTS*. This framework, obviously more desultory and less ritualistic than that of *REQUIEM*, affords an admirable basis for a valid exposition of the poet's philosophy and for a running satire on crimes and foibles of modern life. The poem abounds in racy London imagery never dwindling into mere prosaic description. Snobbery, greed, hypocrisy, war-mindedness, class consciousness, and decadence fall among the objects of Wolfe's attack. The sharp juxtaposition of tragedy and humor proves stimulating rather than confusing. Some of the finest insight and poetry which Wolfe ever achieved may be found in the chapter dealing with the murder trial, culminating in the ironical meetings of the judge, the charwoman, and the imaginary poet.

*REVERIE OF POLICEMAN* again evinces Wolfe's power to sustain his inspiration throughout a long poem. Superficially it stands apart from his other major works, for it is both semi-dramatic and in a measure introspective and autobiographical. But while Wolfe calls his book a "ballet" and presents it as a fantastic drama (obviously under some obligations to Pirandello), this

closet drama is clearly less practicable as a ballet or play than as a poem. Its climax, for example, is composed oddly enough of a sequence of seven sonnets. And ably as Wolfe analyzes the conflict between himself and his environment, between his idealistic and satirical, his mental and his material self, he still shows a philosophical and aesthetic vision detached from personal or particular accidents which characterizes all his more serious poems. Indeed this detachment he admirably symbolizes in the lyrics concerning the fountain which stands at the heart of his fantasy. None of his productions summarizes his diverse qualities as a poet so sharply. Love and aspiration, irony and satire, fancy and humor meet in its diversified pages. A lyricism that is still eloquent and a colloquialism that is still imaginative give its scenes the aesthetic excitement always attending the charmed reconciliation of seeming contraries. The poem is especially happy in its Faust-like allegorical symbolism. If not the most deeply imaginative of its author's works, it may claim to be the most pleasantly surprising.

Of Wolfe's major volumes his sober *X AT OBERAMMERGAU* is the most regrettably obscured in the public eyes beneath his too numerous second-rate volumes. In it a once-Victorian poet becomes strikingly modernistic. The poem is an allegory as delicate as it is powerful. Its story gives the clue to the passionate vigor of Wolfe's thought. As a Liberal, a British Civil Servant and a Jew, a lover of liberty, of peace and of the ideals of Goethe and Heine as he understands them, he faced at contemporary *OBERAMMERGAU* the ironically hostile portent of Nazi Germany. In the fable of his poem the actor originally intended to play Christ is ill and a mysterious stranger (with obvious symbolical connotations) assumes his rôle. Once more a Jew is baited to death upon the cross. The old religious symbolism catches fire anew. It affords, to be sure, an instance of the biblical aphorism that to him who hath shall be given, for a knowledge of the biblical story, of modern Germany and even of the medieval or pseudo-medieval drama is essential to a full comprehension of the details. There is, for example, a stunning sonnet equating Caiaphas with the Nazi archbishop Müller. Choruses of inspired mystical symbolism neighbor slashing satire on the brutality of the Nazi police

force. The entire work glows today with a powerful and prophetic meaning apparently lost upon most of its first reviewers. One is reminded of Dürer's pictures of the Passion. Wolfe wrote here with his own blood in the ink. For this particular variety of virtually religious intensity I can think of no modern poem quite its equal. Perhaps no living poet, not even the too retrospective T. S. Eliot, has shown so firm a grasp of Christian imagery or so clear an awareness of its perennial freshness.

Wolfe's best satire is far from playful. A kindly wit befitting a master of light verse, as in *KENSINGTON GARDENS*, in some measure he possessed; but Pope himself spoke in no more impassioned terms than Wolfe of the sacred and cleansing weapon of the satirist. "They also serve who only stand and hate." His first satirical poem of any length, the remarkable *SHYLOCK REASONS WITH MR. CHESTERTON*, proves less a merry jest than a curse on both your houses, and less a curse than a tragic and pathetic prayer. It becomes an intellectual Jew's fervent and imaginative remonstrance with the most bigoted enemy of his race, as well as with the fated errors of his own people. Wolfe as usual writes best when his emotions are aroused by the public rather than by the strictly private aspects of life. He frequently achieves his strongest work, too, when his realistic satire, in leading him away from tuberous Swinburnian fustian, guides him to broad dialect. The apotheosis of his serious satire appears, accordingly, in his free imitation of Byron, his brilliant but too facetiously entitled poem, *DON J. EWAN*. Much as in his early *LONDON SONNETS* and in his mature *UNCELESTIAL CITY* he successfully employs cockney dialect, so here he uses the crudest American dialects. Wolfe's Don from Kentucky gives amazingly eloquent pictures of slimy journalism in New York, slimy politics in Washington, and slimy art in Hollywood. The three following cantos deal with the Nazis in their homeland, with the Russian propagandists in France, and with the homebred follies of Englishmen. In all these cases one may easily differ from Wolfe's politics and still enjoy his art. Unhappily for the total effect of his poem, the last canto proves the least important, but one may assert that hardly Pulci, Canning, or Byron himself put this rattling stanza to more telling use. The poem fairly bids comparison with such classic speci-

mens of inspired doggerel as Skelton's *Colin Clout* Butler's *Hudibras*, Churchill's *Ghost* and Byron's own masterpiece. Americans such as Leonard Bacon, who have attempted this style, however successful they may have been, fail to approach Wolfe's eloquence.

### III

So much, then, for his five major compositions. But if some of his less important books, especially when read in quantity, grow monotonous, it would be manifestly unfair to deny his other works considerable interest. The critical problems which they evoke can be epitomized by contrasting, as he himself invites us to do, one of his earliest books with a posthumous and even unfinished publication; in other words, *KENSINGTON GARDENS* with *KENSINGTON GARDENS IN WAR-TIME*. The former booklet shows Wolfe's cleverness and sensitivity in a superficial nature imagery, the latter, his deepening response to true human emotions when these swim into his ken. The first, being largely about if not addressed to children, is deliberately naïve and avowedly slight. His last book is less slight than unpretentious. Indeed it proves a curiously moving treatment of a gigantic theme which may well be approached modestly. Every rumble of Wolfe's rhetorical bass drum is silenced. The most appalling tragedy in modern times, the agony of London, is for the present at least perhaps better indicated in child's verses than in a pretentious epic. The Eden of Kensington sketched by Wolfe in his earlier lyrics seems a bit trivial; but the quiet overtones in his last book show him capable of rising to a great theme. Kensington as inferno affords better poetry than Kensington as paradiso. The war-time tragedy he treats also in another volume, *OUT OF GREAT TRIBULATION* (1939), lyrics devoted to the trials of his race and civilization. These books have largely been smothered by explosions of guns and torpedoes, but when the storm clears, regardless of how the wind blows, these may be the very trifles to survive. They are, in particular, too little known in America; and they certainly stand among the most original of Wolfe's minor works.

The peculiar charm of his *EARLY POEMS* has already been mentioned, as well as the temporary sterilization of his powers in the

too-numerous and over-literary lyrics of the middle of his career. Of course a chilly perfection or an old-fashioned romantic sentiment confers a certain grace on many poems in such volumes as *THE UNKNOWN GODDESS*, *SNOW*, and *THIS BLIND ROSE*. But the lesson of his shortcomings is almost as valuable as the beauty of these minor successes. His limitations are most apparent in such books as *HUMORESQUE* and *NEWS OF THE DEVIL*. The former of these poems is the better, if for no other reason than that it wholly fulfills its author's intentions. It consists in a series of deliberately fragile and generalized love lyrics presenting the shop-worn figures of Pierrot, Pierrette, and Harlequin shown, as already noted, in the lavender atmosphere of a Debussy ballet. Today we are inclined—perhaps overinclined—to weary of these frail and dusty artificialities. With its china manikins in pastoral costume, *HUMORESQUE* is thus an exquisite museum piece; it wholly lacks an aromatic fragrance. In other words, it is too flowery and insufficiently flower-like. One is reminded of basket designs on French lattice-work wall-paper. *NEWS OF THE DEVIL*, on the contrary, is an altogether hellish performance, cloudy and vaporous with romantic rhetoric. It begins promisingly with the ever-timely and inexhaustible theme of the depravity of modern metropolitan journalism; but the second half of the poem explodes in a burst of religious enthusiasm as ill-timed as it is unpoetic and unconvincing. The rage, to use Blake's image, remained in the poet and scarcely kindled a spark in his vicious rhetoric. Thus for true poetry his *HUMORESQUE* attempts too little, his *NEWS OF THE DEVIL* too much. The divergent urges of his personality represented in these two books, his aesthetic culture and his sensitivity to social evil, unite in his happier productions in work highly unlike these curious but unsatisfying confections of apprentice years.

Last in a summary of his achievement must be mentioned his light-handed and artful renderings from the Greek Anthology contained in his two volumes, *OTHERS ABIDE* and *HOMAGE TO MELEAGER*. With a subject given him and a spatial limitation imposed, his poetry acquired both substantial content and economy of line, together with the ease and grace his own by natural right. His translations recapture the filigree lightness of the best

classical jewelry. As James Stephens declared, who is well qualified to speak, Wolfe's versions on the whole easily supersede all others. With his brilliant translations from the Greek may also be associated his graceful renderings of Heine.

## IV

Wolfe's prose may, I think, safely be forgotten, since most of it is a needless apologia for his own poetic style. But how much substantial work lies within his many volumes of verse has at least been indicated in this summary. Criticism to date has been too industrious in detecting his obvious weaknesses, too negligent in discerning his quiet strength. As author of *REQUIEM* he remained one of the last of the successful romantics, as author of *X AT OBERAMMERGAU* he became one of the more notable of the moderns. His genuine poetry is equally distinguished intellectually, emotionally, and technically. The firm satire, irony, and impassioned eloquence of *THE UNCELESTIAL CITY* and *DON J. EWAN* should by no means be overlooked, for, as Wolfe observed, such writing has cleansing properties more essential than ever to the modern world. If ever a poet unburdened his heart, Wolfe has done so in his *REVERIE OF POLICEMAN*. The closely packed quatrains of *LAMPOONS*, more humorous and wise than bitter or satirical, remain unsurpassed in their kind. Even amidst his miscellaneous lyrics, in *EARLY POEMS*, in *SNOW*, indeed in almost all his volumes—and especially in his shorter poems—inspired by the tragic period of the second World War—there is gathered too much sound art to allow his parting to pass without some homage from both sides of the Atlantic.

Wolfe is, I believe, not difficult to place among the poets of the second generation of the twentieth century. He spent the full measure of his genius, especially in five major poems. His stormy poetical career commenced in one war and ended abruptly and tragically in another. From causes already indicated, his life was punctuated with wasteful bickering and repeated assaults from hardened critical foes to whom he stoutly refused to surrender. In the midst of the most bitter of modern wars his own struggles ceased. Now we can view his art more coolly than during his lifetime and from it find emergent a singularly attractive

man and writer, some of whose super-abundant work will be lost, but all of whose major poems should survive. His social background, epigrammatic and lyrical gifts, sustained powers, romantic idealism, delicate pathos, and grave satire suggest a reasonable comparison with the poet whose name came in fact the most often to his lips. Wolfe fully earned the honor to be called what he clearly aspired to become: the Heinrich Heine of our own age.

*by John T. Westbrook*

### HERITAGE OF LOAM

One soul placental to the wind and rain  
Will carry this, the heritage of loam,  
Eternal down the dark transcending pain,  
With seas coeval and with stars at home:

The right to feed blue asters on a hill  
And tippie ferns that purple waters lave,  
To pass from dust to mist, returning still  
To nature's best the best that nature gave—

To give back to the rose in fumbling part  
What summer was along a lilting lawn,  
And bayou-sides at bird-hush. One brim heart  
That drank of jasmine wind and quaffed of dawn

Will find it destiny enough divine  
To feed the hunger of the oak and pine.

*Lodwick Hartley*

## SEQUENCE

### I

Those valiant souls who once with joy set sail  
Beyond the farthest waters of surmise  
Must look upon the fruit of their travail  
And shout their bitter laughter to the skies.  
What gain to vaunt, what noble prize to share,  
What balm to pour upon a livid wound?  
Discovery shows the fabled island bare,  
With only bones to strew its icy ground.  
Deluded and alone upon a mount  
Whose height commands an Africa of waste  
They slake their thirst beneath a brackish fount  
And feed on apples ashen to the taste.  
And we who seek for light their Spirit's shrine  
Are blessed with rings and sent away as swine.

### II

We turned into an unexpected lane,  
A straggling lane unlovely, desolate.  
We saw a phantom house that clasped in pain  
A weedy garden with a fallen gate.  
'The dead are here,' we said, 'and Time stands still.  
Here valiant days and years must fail,  
Here lose the spectrum Life its colors till  
A crescent day-moon could not be more pale.  
We paused, for speaking was a needless thing  
And echoes ran along the darkling wall  
Like frightened shadows, ever vanishing  
In misty niches out of mortal call.  
Again we did not speak, but each a hand  
Could hold, could feel its warmth, and understand.

by William S. Knickerbocker

## WAM FOR MAW

### DOGMA VERSUS DISCURSIVENESS IN CRITICISM

**THE NEW CRITICISM.** An examination of the Critical Theories of I. A. Richards, T. S. Eliot, Yvor Winters, William Empson. By John Crowe Ransom. Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions. 1941. Pp. 339.

**THE PHILOSOPHY OF LITERARY FORM.** Studies in Symbolic Action. By Kenneth Burke. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press. 1941. Pp. 445.

**F**ERTILITY of speculation concerning literary processes and products, and an audacity in proposing critical schemata, have characterized literary opinion in the United States since the second decade of this century. The result has been to obliterate recognizable conventions in criticism and has furthered literary anarchy in all literary forms. Encouraging signs of contraction have been evident since the Humanist polemics of a decade ago, chiefly through police measures exercised by some eminent minds of our generation: especially by Messrs. R. P. Blackmur, Allen Tate, Yvor Winters, T. S. Eliot, and I. A. Richards. When Mr. John Crowe Ransom's name is added, one sees the uncertain formation of a new school of critics who have successfully laid the bases of a "New Rhetoric": a "new rhetoric" which has its attractions and benefits, to be sure, but which has obviously so far failed to secure a recognizable criterion to discriminate literary quality.

Mr. Ransom's **THE NEW CRITICISM** and Mr. Burke's **THE PHILOSOPHY OF LITERARY FORM** conspicuously mark discernible poles of literary opinion concerning the nature and purpose of poetry, hereafter impossible to be ignored by venturesome writers of a speculative turn engaged with problems of literary criticism. There may be other points of critical reference, established by other able and suggestive critics, but, for purposes of clarifying a field of aesthetic speculation already confused by pluralistic miscellany, and of securing perspectives in current American lit-

erary criticism, these other points may be, for the present, left undiscussed and perhaps unnoticed.

Until now, obsession with criticism has been a mark of "health" in a period of creative fatuity. Clusters of dialecticians here and there have aligned themselves with a "line"; and of these, Mr. Ransom has carried an idea, which the Southern Croceans (sometimes mis-called "Southern Aristotelians") have nobly espoused, to a point of identification which alters the nature and direction of the discussion of poetry. Mr. Burke is a member of no school. As an independent critic, he is particularly arresting. For years he has persisted in his syncretistic forays, enlarging the bounds of the concept of criticism beyond those of the restrictedly aesthetic. His books have serially revealed a cumulative development, fixing coördinates, courageous in exploration, mutations, mutings, and amendments. His *THE PHILOSOPHY OF LITERARY FORM* is, with the exception of the introductory essay which gives the book its title, a collection of his more notable essays in criticism composed during the decade of the 'thirties and manifest the working of his method clearly defined in his relatively little-noticed *ATTITUDES TOWARD HISTORY*, published five years ago. The present attempt to correlate Mr. Ransom's *THE NEW CRITICISM* and Mr. Burke's *THE PHILOSOPHY OF LITERARY FORM* resolves itself into an effort to move into the newer perspectives of the criticism of poetry, even though the correlation of the two books will indicate that Mr. Burke's book begins where Mr. Ransom's leaves off.

## I

Mr. Ransom's thinking in *THE NEW CRITICISM* lends itself admirably to a perspective which gives a distinct vista of Mr. Ransom's accumulated verse and prose, and supplies a clue to what has been hitherto somewhat obscured by his profound philosophic tendencies. Those who were early attracted by his verse and prose in the decade of the late 'twenties of this century were, perhaps, only too keenly aware of his grotesque, and occasionally monstrous, departure from what, until then, was generally recognized as "poetry". It issued from a philosophic process current in the thought and talk of a small group of then inconspicuous citizens of Nashville, now commonly referred to as "The Fugi-

tives", and to whom, in 1927, I called attention in these pages. No longer is it necessary for me to speak of them with a sense of *vox clamantis in deserto*. They are now widely regarded as the best we have. Their verse and defensive prose were the visible evidence of a "revolution", a "reactionary" response to the disorders of rhetoric and verse-composition then prevalent. Above all, it was "Gothick". Its comic element in serious contexts struck me forcibly then, and I am to be excused if I called attention then to the interesting correspondences between "Fugitive" poetry and the verse of Donne and the Metaphysicals. Since those days, thanks to Mr. Cleanth Brooks, Jr., I am increasingly aware of the diversities and disparities between the English metaphysicals and the contemporary Southern poets who have evolved a poetry quite original and without earlier counterparts. It is the more "American" because it emerged from a folk-consciousness of rich and earthy humor: actually, the poetry of one at least of these "Fugitive" poets emerged from a high comic sense, as I indicated in my own *jeu d'esprit*, "The Friction of Powder-Puffs". But, having moved audaciously into an uncharted region of possible verse-stuff, Mr. Ransom and his friends supplied their own *apologiae* in various modes of prose, their "dogma" getting into form adaptable to their own occasions by sinuous responses to critical pressures exerted by men like T. S. Eliot, I. A. Richards, William Empson, and Yvor Winters. Finding in the evocative *milieu*, which these critics created, sufficient freedom to stabilize and intensify his doctrine, Mr. Ransom enunciated it with steady and confident voice in *GOD WITHOUT THUNDER, THE WORLD'S BODY*, and in this present book, *THE NEW CRITICISM*. What is significant is that he has supplied centers of literary discussion and creative literary experiments (like Princeton, Yale, and Harvard), textbooks which have exercised and energized responsive minds there which until then suffered for lack of materials and directions for poetry and for the criticism of poetry. Concomitantly, the partial systemization of his thought was attempted by one of his disciples, Mr. Cleanth Brooks, Jr., who, writing in the cogent and coherent manner necessitated by the academies, supplemented the masculine thrust of the master.

Eristic in method, yet suave and persuasive in manner, Mr. Ransom adroitly eluded those who charted his wake and won the de-

votion of those sufficiently patient to reflect upon his novelties of statement and traditionalism of doctrine. To extract Mr. Ransom's doctrine from his special manner of dispensing it in *THE NEW CRITICISM* would result in missing the most alluring part of his book. Wisely he writes at the end of his Preface, "I have in advance a proper gratitude towards all my readers, but the ones to whom I shall be most grateful are those who will read these contents consecutively." For the doctrine he delivers, after skillful manoeuvring with the bodies of criticism of Messrs. Richards, Empson, Eliot, and Winter, would seem, when baldly stated, to be self-evident. It is that a poem should be studied as a poem and not as something else. Because in their discussions of poetry, the representatives of "the new criticism" (like Messrs. Richards, Eliot, and Winters) have permitted extraneous elements and issues to mix with the concept of "absolute" poetry, Mr. Ransom eristically examines typical extracts from their work and exposes the impurities of these irrelevant matters. A profoundly impressive graph of the constituent and sanctioned elements of a poem is supplied by Mr. Ransom on page 299 of *THE NEW CRITICISM* but it would be dishonest to turn immediately to that page and to that graph for an immediate seizure of Mr. Ransom's doctrine. The steps leading to that page are cleverly devised by Mr. Ransom and though, in order to reach the royal reward of the graph, the reader must first be instructed in the fallacies which debase the critical dogmas of Messrs. Richards, Eliot, and Winters, he is rewarded by his instructor in being shown the "psychological" irrelevancies in Mr. Richard's system, the "historical" irrelevancies in Mr. Eliot's system, the "moral" irrelevancies of Mr. Winter's system of criticism, which so markedly contrast with the beauties of the "ontological" criticism which Mr. Ransom espouses.

Though I nominate Mr. Ransom's *THE NEW CRITICISM* to a high place in American literature as a delicately discriminative exercise in writing by one of the most venturesome speculative thinkers in the country, I cannot fail to suspect that the strategy of presentation is an artful piece of fancy dodging. What appears to be Mr. Ransom's analysis of the critical systems of Messrs. Richards, Eliot, and Winters may be seen, when his book is considered as a coherent whole, to be an admirable artifice to prepare the reader for Mr. Ransom's special theory of a poem and Mr. Ransom's

own invention of a machine for the "criticism" of poetry. By isolating and immunizing passages from the critical writings of Richards, Eliot, and Winters which serve his purpose, Mr. Ransom disposes of what he considers the characteristic and dominant constituent of each; but, having dispensed with these constituents, magnanimously preserves certain elements from each of his three critics which contribute strength to his own skillfully withheld doctrine. *THE NEW CRITICISM* becomes, in effect, a major moment of what ought to be called "metacriticism", because it carries the criticism of criticism to a point beyond the possibility of criticism because of its subtle sapping of the factor which differentiates criticism from science—the factor of qualitative judgment. The total impact of Mr. Ransom's reasoning in *THE NEW CRITICISM* is not too far removed from Mr. Horace M. Kallen's essay in *CREATIVE INTELLIGENCE* entitled "Value and Existence". (In that essay, Mr. Kallen demonstrated that "existence" is "value"; and in Mr. Ransom's book, the existence of a poem constitutes its value.) Yet Mr. Ransom seems to contradict his own keen sense of the difference between "scientific" and "poetic" discourse by succeeding in identifying his "ontological" criticism with what he thinks is science but what is probably thought of by anybody else as epistemology applied to the aesthetics of a poem.

Perhaps before an "ontological" criticism of poetry is possible, an epistemological prelude is necessary: before we may know what a poem is, we must know what constitutes what knowing a poem is. The "is" of a poem constitutes its "ontology" but before the "is" may be identified, some exploring of the knowing-process may be necessary as a preliminary. To this, Mr. Ransom has given himself with great astuteness. I have myself discovered some fourteen variants of a definition of poetry in *THE NEW CRITICISM* and venture to repeat them here, slightly out of the order in which they appear in Mr. Ransom's pages:

- I. "Poetry represents ultimately a kind of philosophical temperament that carefully finds the occasion to pursue its science and at the same time to refuse conscientiously to concede that science has a valid world-view, a realistic ontology." p. 80

2. "Poetry intends to recover the denser and more refractory original world which we know loosely through our perceptions and memories." p. 281
3. "Total intention is the total meaning of the finished poem, which differs from the original logical content by having acquired a detail which is immaterial to this content, being everywhere specific, or local and particular, and at any rate unpredictable." p. 224.
4. "A beautiful poem is one which proceeds to the completion of a logical structure, but not without attention to the local particularity of its components." p. 53
5. "A poem is a democratic state, hoping not to be completely ineffective, not to fail ingloriously in the business of a state, by reason of the constitutional scruple through which it restrains itself faithfully from a really imperious degree of organization." p. 43
6. "But a poem is an experience in time; and after we have had it once we can have it again, and better, by reading it a second time. We think through it at more leisure this time, and leisurely or even sprawling thinking, thinking that is in something less than entire bondage to the animal or scientific will, is the only poetic formula that I, at any rate, can find." p. 184
7. "... poems are now the official or approved forms of our actions." p. 233
8. "I should think diffuseness—the scattering of attention over the field of local particularity—is the principal and characteristic poetic device, as it certainly is the elementary one." p. 103
9. "The composition of a poem is an operation in which the argument fights to displace the meter, and the meter to displace the argument." p. 295
10. "In theory, the poem is the resultant of two processes which come from opposite directions." p. 300
11. "On the one hand, a poem is a complex of meaning, and it has two distinguishable features: a logical structure and a texture, on the other hand, a poem is a complex of sound, and this has its corresponding features: a meter, and a musical phrasing which is a texture. Further, subordinating the sound to the meaning, in honor of the prejudices of our 'human interest', we have the

meaning as a structure attended by the sound as its texture; the relation obtaining both as a whole and from moment to moment." p. 268

12. "Heterogeneity is the specific, the characteristic mode of poetry." p. 130
13. "But a degree of heterogeneity of material is always present in poetry (we could almost say it is the differentia of poetry as compared with prose. . .)" p. 177
14. "I suggest that the meter-meaning process is the organic act of poetry, and involves all its important characters." p. 296

The consistency of these definitions must be at once evident as well as the perspicacity of the critic. Mr. Ransom apparently is determined to distinguish "poetry" from what he calls "science" and he achieves this intention by an undifferentiated use of the word "science" which is what he wants it to be in the light of his intention. Yet, before he is through he has succeeded in making "poetry" a kind of "science" which is not subject to verification because of the stress he lays upon "heterogeneity" and "local particularity" as the identifiable qualities of a poem. What engages the attention of the thoughtful reader is Mr. Ransom's ambition to overhaul the old, and invent a new, "science" of semantics: but the "semantics" which he concocts must greatly trouble exacting specialists in that activity because his imperial inventiveness has failed to account for the different processes and products between "naming" and "meaning". Following the lead of Messrs. Ogden and Richards who similarly failed to make this distinction, Mr. Ransom is gifted in the Adamic art of naming, making meaning a matter of creativeness. A dictionary of Mr. Ransom's pivotal words and phrases might do much to elucidate his meanings but that is an exercise for scholiasts.

What Matthew Arnold recommended, in the Preface to his *POEMS*, 1853, as "architectonics" of a poem, Mr. Ransom describes as "the structure" of a poem; and what Arnold in the same Preface scorned as the temptation of "caprice" (or intrusive irrelevancies which disturb the architectonics or logical structure of a poem) Mr. Ransom singles out as the feature which distinguishes an effective poem. Mr. Ransom's stress upon these incidental features makes him the advocate for a kind of poem

which retains its "romantic" aspects even though the binding and shaping power of logical structure and the restraints of prosodic techniques impose a constabulary restraint upon Pegasus in his more mounting moments. What Arnold would call "caprice", Mr. Ransom scientifically calls "texture" and defines his term as the complexities of "local particularities" (by which term all I can gather is that he means the unpredictable overflows of the poet's "originality" and "peculiarities" of prejudice.) "I should think diffuseness", he writes on pages 103, ". . . the scattering of attention over the field of local particularity—is the principal and characteristic poetic device, as it is certainly the elementary one."

Mr. Ransom's "ontological" criticism compels the distinction between "structure" and "texture". To discern the conflict between, or the interplay of, these two powers in a poem constitutes the critic's first necessity. "To define the structure-texture procedure of poets," he writes on page 275, "is to define poetic strategy, the last and rarest gift that is given to a poet." Some correspondence exists between this dualism and Mr. I. A. Richards's terms for the analysis of metaphor—"tenor" and "vehicle". Mr. Ransom defines "tenor" as "the original context" of the metaphor, while "vehicle" is the "importation of foreign content" (page 67). "Tenor," he says on page 73, "is metaphorical for the prose argument, and vehicle for the poetic amplification of it, or departure from it." By comparing these definitions of "tenor" and "vehicle" with Mr. Ransom's "structure" and "texture", one may suppose that, except that Mr. Ransom's terms apply to the whole poem instead of merely to a metaphor, Mr. Ransom's terms are interchangeable with Mr. Richards': Richards' "tenor" equals Mr. Ransom's "structure", and Richards' "vehicle" equals Ransom's "texture". Perhaps Mr. Ransom's terms do constitute a distinction with a difference but it is difficult, on the grounds of his definition and usage of the terms, to see precisely wherein the distinction lies. "The structure proper is the prose of the poem, being a logical discourse of almost any kind, and dealing with almost any content suited to a logical discourse. The texture, likewise, seems to be of any real content that may be come upon, provided it is so free, unrestricted, and large that it cannot properly get into the structure. One guesses that it is an *order* of content,

rather than a *kind* of content, that distinguishes texture from structure, and poetry from prose." (pages 280-281).

Mr. Ransom's vocabulary and syntax are sufficiently clear to any one acquainted with his artistic mode of expression to obviate misunderstanding. They precisely point his precise meaning revealing a creative mind so richly endowed with philosophic drifts that any paraphrase runs the risk of mis-statement. What Mr. Ransom submits as "ontological" criticism is, I contend, not criticism at all, and not ontological. It is a method of descriptive rhetoric, supplying a useful scheme of analysis to determine the intrinsic unity and coherence of a poem as a work of art through identifying its "structure" and distinguishing it from the more exciting "texture" or "local particularities". Genially hospitable to all poems because of its universal applicability, it fails to supply a discriminating element to discover determinants of value. This "ontological criticism", by its emphasis on intrusive and extraneous elements in a poem, not strictly and organically related to the logical transcript in prose of the poem's "argument", becomes an accessible organon for the analysis of a poem and achieves the final effect of assisting one to solve the problem of how to *know a poem* from a scientific report. Presumably, this is important to philosophers.

In spite of his ironic awareness of scientific discourse as a necessary, because existent, evil, Mr. Ransom apparently renders his tribute to science by coaching his theory of poetry in the discourse of science, reducing his concept to a diagram which is immensely impressive. Its mathematical precision is as handsome as the binomial theorem from which, however, it is carefully distinguished. Mathematical formulae have their own form of hypnosis to susceptible minds which prefer brevity and cogency but susceptible minds which are still disposed to the checks of scepticism may discover that behind the symmetrical facades of diagrams (however fancy the circles and lozenges of the diagrams may be) lies a positivistic dogma, inapplicable to specifiable poems, so long as the diagrams remain purely descriptive and destitute of qualitative factors. Mr. Ransom's diagram, intended to assist "ontological" critics, lacks clues to any scale of values even though it is pragmatically employable as a gadget to retard the attention of a critic while reading a poem and to prolong analysis of any re-

ferable specimen. What constitutes goodness in structure, or what constitutes goodness in texture, are left unsettled: and in so far as it lacks this, the diagram remains the visible and graphic explication of a dogma of rhetoric—or a pedagogue's device to arrest attention and to eliminate impatience with any novelty which may interfere with *a priori* notions of what is conventional in a poem. Just what to do with the "indeterminants" of poetry (or "texture" in a poem) is left unsettled: presumably, they have their value because they are "indeterminants".

So, one suspects, we are left with a more philosophical re-statement of what Mr. John Livingston Lowes said more clearly in *CONVENTION AND REVOLT IN POETRY* and the contributors to Mr. Eliot's symposium, *TRADITION AND EXPERIMENT*. The unanswered questions remain unanswered by Mr. Ransom, though everyone should be grateful for the distinction he makes between "structure" and "texture": and of the two, "texture" is the more important. If we consider *THE NEW CRITICISM* as prolegomena for a much more important book Mr. Ransom should write, we may isolate the following sentence as the most inviting and exciting in the book. I cite from page 273: "... perhaps the texture will even define the structure, rather than the other way round." The unresolved paradox of this utterance, to an unphilosophical and un-ontological reader like myself, appears to become this: under the control of texture will the structure of a poem become its texture?

## II

The answer to that inquiry can, I suppose, only be made by Mr. Ransom.

Whereas Mr. Ransom considers poetry solely and absolutely as a *product* which "represents ultimately a kind of philosophical temperament that carefully finds the occasion to pursue its science and at the same time to refuse conscientiously to concede that science has a valid world-view, a realistic ontology", Mr. Kenneth Burke in his *THE PHILOSOPHY OF LITERARY FORM* is concerned with poetry as a social and technological *process*, and supplies an organon for the indeterminants in a poem as a gestative act of symbolization.

Both Mr. Ransom and Mr. Burke are agreed on the symbolic

significance of a poem: Mr. Ransom's statement that "... poems are now the official or approved forms of our actions" (page 233 of *THE NEW CRITICISM*) might have been written by Mr. Burke as the determining idea of his book. But Mr. Burke's mind moves by a process of inclusion, whereas Mr. Ransom's by a process of exclusion. The haunting metaphor which delivers Mr. Burke's "secret" seems to be his obsession with the sea: subsidence in and emergence from liquidity. In his neglected book, *ATTITUDES TOWARD HISTORY*, he called attention to this oceanic attraction and in a revealing footnote of Volume One of that personal confession he supplied a clue to his methodology in his references to the bifocal fish called "anablepsis"; an organism which can simultaneously see in two media—water and air. Mr. Burke undoubtedly is nearer than is Mr. Ransom to Mr. Eliot's statement: "When a poet's mind is perfectly equipped for its work, it is constantly amalgamating disparate experience." The "disparate experience" is undoubtedly the domain of "the forsaken merman" for Mr. Burke. Few living critics are as voracious for knowledge and experience as Mr. Burke: his series of books clearly indicate the most ambitious effort in America to encompass the best of what is being thought and said and to supply clues to the reflective poet for orientation in this vast sea.

Mr. Burke's *THE PHILOSOPHY OF LITERARY FORM* is a contribution to soteriology which should be read as a supplement to, and partial correction of, his *ATTITUDES TOWARD HISTORY*. Perhaps the most comprehensive statement of his view is this: "To an extent, books merely exploit our attitudes—and to an extent they may form our attitudes" (p. 235, *PHILOSOPHY OF LITERARY FORM*). This is a variant of his footnote in Volume II of *ATTITUDES TOWARD HISTORY* (page 113): "We are also suggesting ... that there is a point at which a man ceases to write a book and the book begins writing the man." Mr. Burke is no Puritan in the commonly-accepted sense of the word, but his high reverence for the printed page is indicated in his belief that poetry is a religious function manifested as "symbolic action". Just so, the Puritan's relief in the plenary inspiration of the Holy Bible. Mr. Burke's creed is appropriately expressed in some unforgettable verses on the last three pages of *THE PHILOSOPHY OF LITERARY FORM*:

Hail to Thee, Logos,  
Thou Vast Almighty Title,  
In Whose Name we conjure—  
Our acts the partial representatives  
Of Thy whole act.

May we be thy delegates  
In parliament assembled,  
Parts of Thy wholeness.  
And in our conflicts  
Correcting one another.  
By study of our errors  
Gaining Revelation.

May we give true voice  
To the statements of our creatures,  
May our spoken words speak for them,  
With accuracy,  
That we know precisely their rejoinders  
To our utterances  
In the light of those rejoinders.

Rewarding as "the New Criticism" is, as practised by critics as diverse as Richards, Tate, Ransom, Blackmur, Eliot, and Winters its contraction to rigid rhetoric leaves one gasping for air. By a "transcendental" device Mr. Burke subsumes this "new criticism" but floods it with addenda, enabling his readers to expand intellectually and spiritually. His wide reading, generous reflections on the work of modern thinkers like Thurman Arnold, Stuart Chase, Anton Korzybski, Veblen, Sir Richard Paget, Marx, Freud, James, Dewey, and his responses to significant creative writers from the Greeks to the present richly reward the thoughtful reading of his pages. A radiant blitheness and equanimity of spirit pervade his lines, manifesting a temperament aware of modern complexities and difficulties but resolutely committed to facing them, undiscouraged by the delay of complete and final answers. His sense of the comic is shared by Mr. Ransom: but in this sense of the comic, bravely expounded in his *ATTITUDES TOWARD HISTORY*, is the clue to his "salvation device" or what I, clumsily appropriating his trick, call his "contribution to soteriology". People who prize it in Chaucer, Shakspeare, Arnold, and Browning will recognize its presence in Kenneth Burke's style, and miss it in Richards, Winters, and Tate.

The comic sense in Kenneth Burke calls for intelligence, steadied by patience, and a disposition to reach beyond the present schism between the seriousness of matter and lightness of touch in ex-

pression. He has what might be called the sense of the levity-gravity principle. "I see no good reason, except perversities arising in response to the complexities of our times," he writes on page 189 of *THE PHILOSOPHY OF LITERARY FORM*, "why one should have to treat the *exposition* of human motives as synonymous with the *debunking* of human motives. And I hold that, if one refuses to accept this equation, one may seek rather such perspectives as interpret human events by making scientific diagnosis and moral exhortation integral aspects of one's program." His own intention is not to *debunk* but to supply techniques of understanding. His method is ingenious: indeed, if it is only considered seriously, it is monstrous, clumsy, and grotesque. But though it may not be lightly dismissed as eternal trifling which breaks the spell, it treats humanly grave problems in a manner quite inviting. It is aerated by Mr. Burke's comic sense.

An illustration of Mr. Burke's comic sense may be seen in his proposal of salvation by consonantal ablaut. (In this effort to illustrate it, I frankly admit my intention to imitate his pleasant ways of expression, and beg my reader to consult *THE PHILOSOPHY OF LITERARY FORM OR ATTITUDES TOWARD HISTORY* to enjoy and be illuminated by the original.) The Greek word from which we derive "ablaut" means an off-sound but in English the word has been technically limited to the systematic variation of the root vowel in related words, indicating a change of use or meaning. But, if there is no word indicating the systematic variation of the phonetically-determining consonants, Mr. Burke informs us of a passage in Coleridge's *TABLE TALK* that "the consonants are 'the framework of the word'" and supplements this information, borrowing from Mencken's *THE AMERICAN LANGUAGE* a suggestion on 'forbidden words' in four letters. Upon this basis, Mr. Burke constructs a promising interpretive device which he calls "concealed punning" (*THE PHILOSOPHY OF LITERARY FORM*, pp. 51-58).

"Concealed punning", one might suppose, has applications to the names of authors; and by it one may decipher internal tensions in an author's successive acts of writing. Take Keats, for instance. By playing anagrammatically with the five letters of Keats's name, we get the word "steak". By this clue one could correlate the psychosis of Keats in Mr. Burke's manner by proceeding to dis-

course in this way: Keats, as an apothecary's apprentice came into close and continuous contact with physicians, themselves continuously exposed to the complexities of flesh in their patients. Apothecaries are notoriously undernourished and therefore are liable to tuberculosis. Keats had t.b. The normative power of his name acted subconsciously upon him, causing "symbolic action" with its suggestion of "steak", and resulting in a passion which could only be fulfilled in his writing poems of an exquisite, sensuous kind: or which could be satisfied, to use Mr. Burke's convenient phrase, only in "symbolic action".

The possibilities for developing this idea further may be left for others to explore: more pertinent to the present occasion and purpose would be an effort to employ it as an "over-all" instrument, or critical gauge, to Mr. Kenneth Burke. In *ATTITUDES TOWARD HISTORY*, Mr. Burke elucidates his principle of clues as cues. He applies his principle to his own name. "... A man writes his name," wrote Mr. Burke, Volume II (pages 85-86), "he says his number. Your correspondent's name and number begins with 'c'. In trying to appropriate the forensic material, he continues to pronounce his name. He says 'you' and 'it' but is secretly saying 'I'. He can do no other. He identifies himself with as much of the corporate, public material (in the contemporary, in history, in philosophy) as he can encompass." Having himself directed our attention to this mode of "decoding" a writer's work by his nomenclature, Mr. Burke alarms me by the suggestiveness of his comments on the letter which begins his family name. "We may further note," he writes in Volume II, page 90 of *ATTITUDES TOWARD HISTORY*, "that 'b' is a modified 'm', thereby serving to remind us of the mimetic accuracy in Catullus's kiss poem ('kiss is less accurate mimetically than the archaic 'buss'), where he explains 'da mi basia mille', asking repeatedly for those 'myriad busses' in semialliteration."

Has Mr. Burke been conditioned and directed in his development by his own name? "Kenneth" lends itself reversally to "the neck" which carries the suggestion of a poem which has deeply impressed Mr. Burke—Arnold's "The Neckan", the introductory piece for Arnold's "The Forsaken Merman". Both poems are concerned in reverse order with submergence and emergence: The Neckan emerged from the sea to sing his song about his earth-

born wife who had deserted him: the Forsaken Merman, as everyone knows, plunged disconsolately into the depths of the sea, calling his children ("disciples"?) to sink with him to his submarine palaces. Mr. Burke informed us in a footnote of Volume I (pages 19 and 20) of *ATTITUDES TOWARD HISTORY* that his tendency is towards submersion and emergence and says: "I can remember stepping slowly into a lake, until my eyes were even with its surface, the water cutting across the eye-balls," and in that context, specifically cited a couplet from Arnold's "The Forsaken Merman". Revealing as this confession is, the confirmation of it comes from considering "Kenneth" without the anagrammatic distortion: note the given name just as it is. The first syllable obviously equates "know": the second equates "lower" (or "neth-er"): the combination of the two syllables in "Kenneth" resolves into "know what lies under", or "know, by emergence, what is submerged." The whole is comprized by an overall stratagem which discloses the exploratory passion of Kenneth Burke which is strikingly analogous to Matthew Arnold's completion of a similar quest, completed in Arnold's recurrent use of the metaphor of coral islands which "link their arms under the sea". Mr. Burke's paraphrase of this linkage metaphor may be confirmed by referring to page 83 of his Volume II, *ATTITUDES TOWARD HISTORY*, in the passage that plainly says: "But these are merely outstanding peaks of a mimetic mountain range that, for the most part, lies buried beneath the surface of our communicative ocean."

The clan or "cluster" name "Burke", however, subsumes the declensive tendency of "Kenneth", but secures the restoral of equilibrium. "Burke" lends itself, by the soteriological clue of the consonantal ablaut, in three accessible interpretations: "grub", "burg", and "curve". The alteration of "k" into "g" gives the first two: the alteration of "b" to "v" in Burke and the "k" into "c" give the third, or "curve". In "curve", one sees the arc of Mr. Burke's hermeneutics. In brief, the idea would be that "burg" is the symbol of the capitalist order (or bourgeois): but he opposes this in order to compose his mind: what results is the reverse of "burg" (or Burk) into "grub". The hermeneutical act thus illustrated gives this interesting result: the meaning of Kenneth Burke's critical effort is the reconstruction of the burg (or present society) by resorting to grubbing, or delving for roots, motivated

by the desire for physical food ("grub") and, at times, he transcends this by his sense of grub as larva with the hope of biological metamorphosis of larva into winged, aërial creatures. All this conforms to Mr. Burke's ingenious "methodology of the pun".<sup>1</sup>

### III

This review of Mr. Ransom's *THE NEW CRITICISM* and Mr. Burke's *THE PHILOSOPHY OF LITERARY FORM* has resulted in an experiment in criticism described by Mr. Burke as "perspectives by incongruity". Perhaps I have made clear the reason why I think the titles of the two books should have been interchanged. Properly, Mr. Burke is writing on "the new criticism" which is *really* new: conversely, Mr. Ransom is really not writing about criticism at all, though he *does* employ parts of the work of Messrs. Richards, Empson, Eliot, and Winters to supply the propaedeutic for an epistemological scheme which seeks to establish a Philosophy of Literary Form. Mr. Ransom is primarily a speculative philosopher who is temperamentally committed to the analysis of poetry: he is only incidentally a critic; perhaps more, the satisfying expositor. Mr. Burke is primarily a critic of extraordinary inclusiveness, and only incidentally a philosopher. Mr. Ransom's method proceeds about its analytical business with a strong mission to expel "impurities" which impede the action of literary understanding and assimilation, and is absolutist to the point of discharging psychology, history, or moralism from the cameral view of the poem-itself. Mr. Burke's method proceeds syncretistically, markedly contrasting with Mr. Ransom's, finding its power in discursiveness: its hospitality to everything which Mr. Ransom's dogma excludes points the way for the solution of the unresolved paradox which closes Mr. Ransom's book.

Mr. Burke's materials in *THE PHILOSOPHY OF LITERARY FORM* equip the poet for the free activity in a poem which Mr. Ransom's

<sup>1</sup>It would be ungracious, if not invidious, for any one to try his hand at Mr. Burke's methodology of the pun by using it other than I have done. It is perhaps, unfortunate that, as an historical fact, the word "Burking" may be found in Webster's Dictionary to refer to a Criminal Act passed by the British Parliament in 1828 punishing by death any one who murders a human being with the intention of selling the corpse to medical colleges for dissection purposes. The first man condemned under this Act was named "Burke": hence the word "Burking". In the above illustration of Mr. Burke's methodology of the pun, I have consciously refrained from exploiting this fact.

eulogy of the "indeterminants" compels: they supply the "texture" which makes the kind of poem Mr. Ransom likes to analyze. The issue raised by these two books, then, becomes something like an antithesis between criticism-as-dogma and criticism-as-discursiveness; or, to use Mr. Burke's methodology of the pun again, an antithesis between *veracity* and *voracity*. If we think of Mr. Burke's voracity as "maw", we may reverse the letters of that word, creating a new one to describe Mr. Ransom's veracity as "wam".

"Maw" is a wide-open mouth: "wam" is a closing one. Yet both are necessary. For the poet we recommend "maw": for the analyst of his poem we recommend "wam".

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### THIS ELIZABETHAN SHAKESPEARE

*"Yes, the fashion is the fashion."*

—Conrade, MUCH ADO.

SHAKESPEARE. By Mark Van Doren. 344 pp. Henry Holt, New York, 1939.

THE HAMLET OF SHAKESPEARE'S AUDIENCE. By John W. Draper. 254 pp. Duke University Press, Durham, N. C. 1938.

SHAKESPEARE IN AMERICA. By Esther Cloudman Dunn. 310 pp. Macmillan, New York, 1939.

SHAKESPEARE AND OTHER MASTERS. By Elmer Edgar Stoll. 430 pp. Harvard University Press, Cambridge. 1940.

Recently, in proposing a scheme for the presentation of research material, a distinguished scholar suggested that a cardinal part of any article should be the "boost", in which the author "proceeds to magnify the importance of his discovery or argument and to explain what a revolution it will create in the views generally held on the whole period with which it is dealing." And, indeed, all too familiar have become those articles announcing that some new historical detail, some bibliographical trifle, at last happily discovered, will break the shackles of a confining literary tradition or set centuries of crooked thinking aright. The result has frequently been that literary scholarship has ceased its devotion to the whole truth. The perspective of history and

critical tradition have been ignored in a parade of narrow self-assurance: the inductive use of relevant facts has given way to a partial use in *a priori* special pleading. The "boost" is too often passionately concocted, not dispassionately reached. The variations to be played upon such a scheme are infinite, and so long as minute facts in literary history remain to be discovered, we must be resigned to awakening each day to find the literary landscape resurveyed by literary "boosters", some of whom have an eye to possessing it not in the name of truth but of themselves.

That revaluations of the classics should be made from generation to generation is, of course, both inevitable and desirable. For such readjustments scholarship has ultimately its *raison d'être*. Yet the motive of the literary "boost" is not to be found here. It scorns the steady adjustment of an age to a masterpiece, the patient and modest accumulation of fact toward the correction of errors in critical judgment. By its very definition it implies that traditional literary opinion is hopelessly if not stupidly in error. The method of the "boost" is an uncompromising reversal of all that has gone before.

Though the "booster" is feeding nowadays in many fields, perhaps nowhere has he fattened more assuredly than on Shakespeare. Here he has conveniently gone about his work under the slogan of the Elizabethan Shakespeare. Not content with a general correction of eighteenth-century "taste" or Romantic excesses in Shakesperean criticism, he has contended that there is but one Shakespeare, that of the Elizabethan; that not only does the proper understanding of Shakespeare depend upon the corrective awareness of Elizabethan dramatic conventions, symbols, and cultural milieu, but indeed Shakespeare is, and can only be, the sum of what is therein discoverable. Had allegiance to this theory brought forth a credible and consistent Shakespeare, there would have been some comfort and reward; but we have been proffered a host of new and incompatible Shakespeares, almost infinite in number, because each remote and unrelated fact discovered concerning the Renaissance "must greatly alter our view of the dramatist". The results of a method which claims the sanction of scientific and historical objectivity are, to say the least, often curiously confused. To cite a recent instance: Mr. Richard

David, having discovered and expounded in his *THE JANUS OF POETS* Elizabethan conventions in dramatic style as infallible indices of Shakespeare's intention in characterization, has concluded that Gloucester is a comic character who was greeted by howls of laughter in the Elizabethan audience when he was blinded. But Mr. Hardin Craig, having established in his *THE ENCHANTED GLASS* the credence given to astrology by the Elizabethan mind, has concluded with his equally precise historical instrument that fatalistic Gloucester was sympathetically recognized by the Elizabethan audience as one whose cosmology made him especially akin to themselves. Such discrepancies might be multiplied.

Among the recent "boosts" is the new *HAMLET*, which Mr. John W. Draper assures us in *THE HAMLET OF SHAKESPEARE'S AUDIENCE* is the play as Shakespeare intended it and as the Elizabethan audience with sensible unanimity responded to it. "There is but one *HAMLET*, and Shakespeare is its prophet, and all others are false": such is the orthodoxy of which Mr. Draper becomes the high priest. This new *HAMLET* is one in which Hamlet and the ghost become the abnormal and suspect, unsocial and quixotic menaces, so warped in their tragic plight that one can only discount all that they utter as the erroneous and unjustified expression of embittered minds. Claudius and Gertrude, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Polonius and even Osrice, on the other hand, assume an Elizabethan normality, not to say wholesomeness and sanity, of attitude and action. Their speeches must be taken at face value and as representations of Elizabethan outlook. As for Hamlet's love for Ophelia: somehow Laertes' confident cynicism that it is "sweet, not lasting" is to be taken as Shakespeare's conception, but Hamlet's repeated profession of lasting affection is to be disregarded. Laertes' reverence for his father is model Elizabethan conduct, but Hamlet's agonized devotion before the Ghost must be construed as filial bias; Claudius' clever regicide showed him to be "neither weak nor stupid". Polonius is at the height of his powers, a benevolent and kindhearted and longsuffering diplomatist, for whose "practical statesmanship" Hamlet's "simple, military standards of life" and naïveté are a sorry match indeed. Consequently Hamlet becomes, for all Mr. Draper's insistence on his manliness, a prince of shreds and patches, unable to act because

of a melancholy superinduced by "an enforced delay", his victories of wit empty because Polonius and the courtiers granted "him the royal privilege of getting the best of all the repartee". One may have, it seems, only one of three Hamlets: Mr. Draper's, or "a mere lunatic, or a willess visionary". Such, in brief, is Mr. Draper's "boost". As Hamlet has said, "Here's fine revolution, an we had the trick to see't."

The entire structure of such a presentation rests upon the assumption of an "Elizabethan mind". Furthermore, Shakespeare's mind is adjudged thoroughly coördinate with the Elizabethan mind, for otherwise there could not be *the* Hamlet of Shakespeare's audience. And still further, the significance and the understanding of the tragedy are made to reside in the singular aspects of its Elizabethanism, not in the residue from which the uniquely Elizabethan has been extracted. Consequently, no responses to the play are legitimate if they be other than those Shakespeare consciously intended, and his intended effects we can know by an historical reconstruction of Elizabethan culture.

One may well ask, however, whether there is an "Elizabethan mind" any more than there is an "American mind" today. Was there an Elizabethan attitude toward Hamlet any more than there is an American attitude toward Jeeter Lester? On the affirmative reply to such questions Mr. Draper's whole revaluation of HAMLET rests. There is, for instance, his underlying contention that the Elizabethan mind viewed the play in political as opposed to moralistic terms, that the main theme of the tragedy is regicide, with ethical, social, and religious implications only incidental. The assumption is that the Elizabethans attended the theatre for clarification of political problems, that they were concerned not with the consequences of political action, but with politics *per se*, that Shakespeare and his audience assessed the characters in terms of political ends, not means. But what evidence is there for this? Certainly not to any degree in the dramatic and literary criticism of the time, nor in the comments of most Elizabethans who saw Shakespeare and his contemporaries. To be sure, there must have been many in the audience who applauded the Machiavellianism of Claudius and the indirection of Polonius—though Mr. Draper admits that Hamlet was among those who

did not admire "the diplomatic type of courtier, for whom the Renaissance was making way". But to attribute to the Elizabethan audience a unanimous approval of Claudius and Polonius, as does Mr. Draper, is to argue somewhat as follows: all Elizabethans were monarchists, hence they all loved monarchy, hence they approved all monarchs unreservedly, hence they were uncritical of any means employed to preserve any monarchy, hence they revered Polonius and Claudius, hence they applauded all the acts of the two! It is only such slippery logic that can lead Mr. Draper to reveal the true, Shakesperean Claudius as preëminently worthy to the Elizabethans because he was shrewd, because he could "satisfy his primal moving passions" while smiling, and because he resembled James I in the magnificence of his court (has Mr. Draper overlooked the widespread Jacobean disgust at such extravagance?). Thus Claudius becomes not primarily a murderer of his brother and an incestuous usurper, but a king, whose office and ambitions, because they were typical of the Renaissance, justified all acts—even a clever regicide! Yet strangely Mr. Draper can state on one page that "the Elizabethans believed their Christian concepts" and on the next, "Whether one call Claudius good or bad depends . . . on one's ethical rigorism . . . for, like Iago, he follows the dictates of his position, age, and character." He can on the one hand demonstrate the intense religiosity of the Elizabethan, declaring "a penchant for moral philosophy was essential to the ideal gentleman", and elsewhere proclaim his own critical heterodoxy in defying those un-Elizabethan-minded cults which have interpreted Shakespeare from a moralistic or religious angle.

The simple explanation of such inconsistencies lies, of course, in the fact that there is no such thing as *the* "Elizabethan mind". There were thousands of Elizabethan minds, one of which was that of Shakespeare, who created and viewed his characters we know not how. Mr. Draper's Claudius is *an* Elizabethan Claudius (or a partial one), but who is bold enough to assert that Lord Burghley, John Donne, and Thomas Dekker would have viewed him with any real unanimity? Is it not rather true that the line separating those who find Claudius in the main admirable, as opposed to those who find him in the main unworthy, is not so much

a horizontal one which demarcates the attitudes of generations and epochs but a vertical one which has distinguished Machiavelians and idealists for nearly four centuries? Hence, when Mr. Draper fixes Hamlet in the tight category of social rebel with the generalization "The Renaissance feared anarchy, and so detested even the idea of social change", one can only ask, "Whose Renaissance? Essex's? the Jesuits'?" Yet on such a flimsy generalization is Hamlet repudiated, and Polonius becomes, as the defender of the *status quo*, "not far removed from the Elizabethan ideal of what a courtier, what a father, what a Worthie Privie Counsellor should be." When Mr. Draper writes, "Elizabethans thought of a man, moreover, not as an individual but as a member of a social class", thereby arguing that Polonius could not be regarded as senile or stupid, one can only ask, "What Elizabethans? And to what extent?" And did they not merely take a stratified society so much for granted that they were free in the drama to concern themselves with the non-political features of the individual? And were there no strictures on James I and Elizabeth from their subjects? Mr. Draper can arrive at the odd conclusion that for Shakespeare to draw a stupid or vicious official in a court involved him in treason against the Elizabethan court!

Among the chief boasts of the neo-Elizabethans has been that of the elimination of subjective, modern biases from intrusion into a work unfitted for their application. By the determination of the constant of the Elizabethan mind all variables are eliminated, so the theory goes, and the meaning of the play is rigidly and objectively fixed. A critical method which is thus final and precise would indeed be a boon. But that the method in question is itself a product of its own age and reads its own literary methods and emphases into the plays has been too little realized. There is behind the Elizabethan Shakespeare, for instance, a kind of sociological and political approach which is generally foreign to Elizabethan critical attitudes and which is the consequence of the rise of humanitarian, realistic, and psychological fiction and poetry of the past hundred years. There was, of course, political satire on the Elizabethan stage as well as court supervision against the use of the theatre for subversive purposes. But in construing HAMLET as consciously and primarily political in intent and effect,

its theme regicide and its characterizations and actions dominated in the last analysis by motives of statecraft, Mr. Draper is reading Shakespeare precisely as did Walt Whitman, who felt that the American mind would be chiefly impressed by the feudal element in Shakespeare's plays and not by the private virtues and devotions. In Elizabethan as in Grecian tragedy the utilization of kings implies not necessarily a concern with kingship *per se*; rather were royal themes and settings employed to enhance the significance of the individuals involved and to heighten the broadly human, as opposed to narrowly political, conflicts—as, for instance, in *ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA*. To regard Shakespeare's plays otherwise is to make them dominantly propaganda; that is, referable above all to current political practices and designed above all to effect political changes.

Moreover, modern sociological attitudes have crept into Mr. Draper's work in his tendency to make *HAMLET* a group tragedy, without especial focus on the hero. It was not merely for want of a better title that Shakespeare described his tragedy as that of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark. There is, to be sure, the tragedy of Claudius (which Shakespeare has elsewhere developed in the figure of Macbeth) as there is that of Iago and Duncan, Goneril and Regan; but Shakespeare has not recreated it in dramatic terms. His dramatic medium, moreover, inasmuch as it was poetic—as opposed to analytic—called for a tragic focus. Shakespeare has not given us the means of dramatically “experiencing” the minor but potentially tragic characters; he has deliberately and wisely avoided building a tragic pity and fear for them. To examine them in the study and reconstruct their tragedy is to do what the Elizabethans did not do: to take them out of the play in which they occur. The sense of many generations in decrying the antagonist and his fellows is therefore sound, however much the case workers may, by sociological reconstructions, find them worthy of pity. Claudius may, of course, be over-villainized, and Mr. Draper (following Mr. Kittredge's lead) has done a service in reviewing his merits; but Shakespeare makes it recurrently clear, even from Claudius himself, that his “soul is tainted” and that our dramatic sympathy is directed toward the tragedy of the Prince himself. Nor is there any proof whatsoever of Mr. Draper's

view that Shakespeare viewed his characters with double vision—their actual traits contrasting with those attributed to them by the hero—with each character's crimes appropriately condoned in the light of his social circumstances. To do so is indeed, as Mr. Draper is forced to admit, to run "the dire risk of confusion of the audience". It is only the closet analysis of the Romantics combined with the sociological objectivity of *AN AMERICAN TRAGEDY* which, imposed from other ages, can do that.

If the aesthetic critics have forgotten Shakespeare and the Elizabethans in their concern with merely the play and themselves, the neo-Elizabethans have frequently ignored the play itself in their reconstruction of its milieu. Thus Mr. Draper can conclude that Polonius is middle-aged because no reference is made to the melancholy which the Elizabethans imputed to old age; then on this negative hypothesis he proceeds to try to explain away Polonius's "oldness" in the play. A more conspicuous case is his defense of Gertrude's marriage: the Queen married Claudius hastily because, having the good of the kingdom at heart and being aware of the need of political stability in the face of Norway's rebellion, she acted from "political necessity". Doubtless a Renaissance queen might normally marry for this or for a thousand other reasons. Yet when Hamlet censures her, Gertrude never once suggests that such was her purpose; on the other hand, she repeatedly evidences shame for her o'er-hasty marriage. One could multiply instances of this sheer interpretative guesswork, by which extra-dramatic motivating factors are imported from some phase of Renaissance life or thought. The Elizabethans could have no more taken them for granted than can we, for they are not in the play and their possible number is infinite. Surely it has been established by Schücking and others that Shakespeare's plays contain within themselves their own dramatic explanation, that the Third Murderer is merely the Third Murderer, that such projections of hypothetical Elizabethan attitudes into the play are as hazardous as the Romantics' reconstruction of Falstaff's bravery or of Iago's "motiveless malignity".

The same may be said of the pseudo-scientific attempts to bury the play under a burden of minutiae of Elizabethan physiology and psychology. Granted that Shakespeare's character creations

may be frequently related to Elizabethan psychological types, it does not follow that the range of his art must or can be cramped within the terms of a rudimentary science, or that the Elizabethan audience was so schooled in it that they classified every character primarily through its categories. To assume that Shakespeare's depiction of a jealous man derived from a careful transposing of an elaborately classified psychology is both to misunderstand the process of dramatic creation and to pursue mere antiquarianism at the expense of the play. Then, as now, a technical reconstruction of Shakespeare's characters in psychological terms may be made in partial explanation of a character with whose creation the particular psychology has had little to do. But if the long outmoded conception of the soul in vogue among the Elizabethans is to be made the measure of Shakespeare's tragic heroes, then has art become the bondsman of science indeed. To explain Hamlet through a species of Elizabethan melancholy (as Mr. Draper has tended to do) is to lose sight of him as a human and tragic figure. For, as Professor Stoll has recently declared, "superfluous psychologizing and physiologizing of poetry and drama casts a blight upon both" and "the disturbing intrusion of antiquarian learning into the interpretation of Shakespeare's characters" goes contrary to the "imaginative and emotional" effects for which drama and poetry are intended.

What are the consequences of this insistence that the only way to Shakespeare is through the strait gate of Elizabethanism? What is Shakespeare's future if, as a recent scholar has put it, "it is necessary to read and understand that body of erudition to which the poets and dramatists had access"? The most obvious and deplorable consequence will be the discouraging of an interest in Shakespeare among those sensitive and intelligent readers who, responsive though they be to poetic and dramatic idioms and conventions, cannot be and do not wish to be Elizabethan specialists. Shakespeare as a central figure in a liberal and humanistic education must be abandoned. For if a meticulous knowledge of Elizabethan psychology, demonology, cosmology, and statecraft is made the *sine qua non* of a reasonable comprehension of Shakespeare's tragic and comic art, then the bard can belong only to a few contending cliques of scholars. And perhaps to them he will

be an empty treasure if, thus hoarded, he must cease to be currency among the rest of men. Moreover, the upshot of the Elizabethan Shakespeare is that he becomes merely a document. The play is lost in its pseudo-historical commentary. That his fellow, Jonson, should have said that he was not for an age but for all time is ironic in the light of the reversal that those near-Elizabethan words are undergoing at the hands of the neo-Elizabethans. For, however much Elizabethan erudition is professedly made only a means to the end of a larger literary comprehension, when Shakespeare is made synonymous with the Elizabethan mind as opposed to Nature (to which Hamlet thought drama should hold a mirror), then attention is diverted from the more permanent aspects of experience to the topical and curious. It has at times, perhaps unfortunately, been supposed that literature could chiefly be defined by its ability to transcend its time through a concern with and portrayal of what Croce has termed "the eternal positions of the human spirit".

The value of such works as Mr. Draper's in the understanding of Shakespeare, however, is not to be gainsaid. One may describe their value as negative rather than positive. They operate chiefly as "thou shalt not" admonitions. Mr. Draper can tell us as have others, for instance, that Hamlet's doubts of the ghost were real, that to the Elizabethans his delay was normally and adequately motivated, and that Hamlet's melancholy expressed itself in easily recognizable symptoms. Such conclusions, however, are salutary restraints rather than liberating agents. Dominant still must be the individual imagination, the interaction of metaphor and experience, guided, adjusted, informed at times by Elizabethan symbols and conventions. But this imagination cannot, as Mr. Draper would have it, play the lackey to a monstrous and all-devouring illusion such as "the Elizabethan mind", which demands, as is the custom in these totalitarian days, and abandonment of all personal liberty, even in the realm of art.

If Professor Stoll can be said to champion an Elizabethan Shakespeare, it is not the topical playwright of Mr. Draper, for in his *SHAKESPEARE AND OTHER MASTERS* he returns once more to insist upon that distinction between literature and life which

has been basic in all his criticism. Greek tragedy, Shakespeare, Molière, Corneille and Racine, Ibsen, Shaw, and O'Neill—all these and others Professor Stoll evokes in his attempt to restore an authentic response to the old poetic drama by exposing the gulf which separates it from realism in motive, psychology, and common experience. It is this confusion between literature and life, between the Spirit of Art and the Spirit of the Age, he contends, which permits "those Taine-like generalizations by which literature is treated as the mirror of the age or [rather] of the critic's own conception of it." "In tragedy," he argues, "we are not reminded of our world about us except enough to be lost in its own", for "supreme art creates another world, not a copy of this". Hence the Elizabethans who saw *THE TEMPEST* did not construe the characters therein as topical, allegorical, or autobiographical in intention and significance. Rather they comprehended them as the familiar creatures of legend and tradition that they were. Against the dramatic double vision recommended by Mr. Draper, one may set Professor Stoll's brief for the dramatic and aesthetic integrity of each play, his denial of the confusing presence of both an esoteric and exoteric meaning. That there should be in the characterization of Ariel nuances that many of Shakespeare's audience could not have appreciated is quite different from "a double, self-contradictory conception" advanced by the minute allegorists.

Insisting as he does on the world of art as opposed to life, Professor Stoll attacks in his Prologue the conception of the critic as sleuth, as detector of topical allusions which such critics assume Shakespeare always contains. Such detective criticism "misinterprets what has been written; it misleads those who write". In opposition, Professor Stoll maintains that "the critic, in his essential function, is only public or audience in finest form, or highest potency"—a view which Mr. Van Doren espouses, too. His learning, therefore, has not been directed toward achieving for himself a private vision of Shakespeare, but rather toward discovering how the average Elizabethan would have received his Shakespeare as a dramatic experience, not as life. The fundamental difference between him and Mr. Draper lies in the fact that he views the Elizabethans not primarily as politically-minded subjects but

rather as inheritors of a long cultural tradition—inheritors whose “memory” was responsive to the accumulated variety and richness of that tradition. That is, while Professor Stoll wishes to view the plays as would an Elizabethan, he does not ignore the fact that what is most significant in the dramas appealed to the Elizabethans as men rather than as Elizabethans. Prospero to them was not Shakespeare or James I, but a magician, developed for them by centuries of legend and lore. Thus paradoxically Professor Stoll has utilized his learning to discount learning as the *sine qua non* in approaching Shakespeare. His enviable familiarity with the drama of the Western tradition has led him back to the position of “the normal human being for whom they [Shakespeare’s words] were intended”. Moreover, in declaring that in interpreting the plays one must not run counter to the dramatist’s intention, he is not isolating each generation in an impenetrable singularity. He is rather attempting to strike into the huge substratum of perennially constant situations and conventions which he finds continuous in Western drama before (and sometimes after) the seventeenth century. He is attempting to slough off the peculiarly modern bias of the naturalistic and psychological in order that the “more instinctive and traditional” Shakespeare may be discovered. He is a follower of Sainte-Beuve’s critical doctrine that though one may find in a work more than the author consciously placed there, he must not find what the author could not “have understood when brought to his notice”. Although Professor Stoll leans heavily on intention as the primary criterion of interpretation, he saves himself from Mr. Draper’s brand of Elizabethanism in two ways: he insists on the aesthetic autonomy of Elizabethan drama; and he attempts not to pluck pat explanations from the infinite complexity of the Elizabethan mind and scene but to adjust the general angle of dramatic vision to reveal the heights and depths of Shakespeare’s art.

Professor Stoll’s study of dramatic intention is focused on Hamlet, Othello, and Iago. Several basic critical tenets in his approach redeem the tragic heroes from the ignoble parts assigned them in little period pieces by Mr. Draper: the Shakesperean tragic hero is innocent and good and is impelled into evil by an outside force,

fate, or villain; his character is to be discovered in his poetic speech rather than in his actions, and between the two there are often discrepancies; as a character who is acted upon, the hero is not represented in "causal and sequential relation" but in direct and poetic expression of his plight. Hence the hero arouses a pity and fear which modern psychological and sociological drama cannot achieve.

There are obvious dangers in this divorcing a character from motive and action. To say "This is drama, is poetry, not psychology" is to oppose what cannot in the broadest senses of those terms be mutually exclusive. To admit an inner struggle in Hamlet need not turn the drama into psychology. Indeed, in his attack on "psychology" and "life", Professor Stoll has neglected to push to the ultimate implications of those terms. Yet his refreshing skepticism before a narrow modern reliance on the psychological and realistic has brought into our view of Shakesperean drama a clearer perspective. One can only applaud his assertion regarding Othello that though a "fool for a hero may be more or less tolerable in certain esoteric, highbrow theatres", in the Elizabethan theatre "he would be out of the question". And Hamlet, he convincingly argues, is human nature, not a doctrine of it; is not a scheming neurotic, but a magnanimous and gallant prince to whom audiences have rightly yielded for three centuries in admiration and sympathy.

Even upon Miss Esther Cloudman Dunn's useful account of the cisatlantic vicissitudes of the dramatist in *SHAKESPEARE IN AMERICA*, the dogma of an absolute Shakespeare throws its shadow. Much of America's approach to Shakespeare has been an ignorant misreading of the dramatist (so runs Miss Dunn's thesis), a blundering progression to the 'correct' Shakespeare of the 1930's, for, "perhaps, only in the last ten years has he entirely escaped the fetter marks of this strange captivity". This 'correct' Shakespeare, one gathers from Miss Dunn's scattered critical comments, is that of the academic neo-Elizabethans. On most of nineteenth-century scholarship, she assures us, "from this distance we may smile with 'gentle humor'." It is, therefore, in the double rôle of historian and critic that Miss Dunn has written of Shakespeare's long struggle with moralists, Puritans (for whom she unconvincingly apolo-

gizes), inadequate actors and theatres, and an unresponsive respectability. And it is this double rôle that causes occasional confusion in the careful reader's mind as to Miss Dunn's critical position and as to the direction of her book.

"Our approach to Shakespeare," she says, "is as to an unquestioned source of wisdom and beauty." Again, she agrees with Hudson that the ethical core of his works accounts for our "relentless preoccupation" with him for three hundred years. Yet the attempts of the leaders of the American Revolution to relate their experiences to those of Shakespeare's characters and to understand the conflict of the plays through their own, she finds "amusing". Jefferson's and Adams's interest in the ethics of the tragedies she dismisses as a typical eighteenth-century observation, based on "a false argument which justified fiction as a 'pleasing' and useful method of teaching conduct." (Yet Miss Dunn might well remember, while disparaging this Horatian doctrine, that the influence of Horace was not negligible in Elizabethan theory and practice; and that the abundant presence of wise-saws in the dramas and the Elizabethan gallants' use of 'tables' at the theatres for recording choice maxims would not seem to argue that Jefferson's and Adams's interest was foreign to Shakespeare's audience. Later, in treating McGuffey's culling of purple passages for his readers, she admits that this didactic emphasis is not "rank heresy".) Of Lincoln she has much to say, concluding that to him Shakespeare was "a substantial and constant companion, not an artistic inheritance from the past". (Wherein are the two necessarily incompatible?) Thoreau, Whitman, and Emerson she classifies together as not having achieved a detached critical estimate of Shakespeare—with the implication that only recently have we learned to read Shakespeare truly, both with a genuine Elizabethan attitude and a critical detachment. And it is this implication which carries for the modern such a troublesome contradiction. In achieving this detached view we are supposed at once to consider him as an 'artistic inheritance' and to recreate what must be at best a partial Elizabethan mind: and in so doing we must *ipso facto* lose the average Elizabethan's immediate, unhistorical, and undetached confronting of Shakespeare. The Elizabethans, after all, did not attend the theatre to grasp

the Elizabethan mind; nor, happily, did they need to recreate this dramatic *x*. By the very process of historical detachment the modern Shakespearean runs the risk of a wholly un-historical approach.

At times, however, Miss Dunn has her misgivings about the finality of the modern-Elizabethan approach. Having showed that each generation sees its own reflection in Shakespeare, she can, unlike Mr. Draper, admit in her closing paragraph the possibility that "the twentieth century Shakespeare is no more 'right' than Garrick's or Kean's, or than the ranting versions of our own growing frontier." She recalls that the Romantics thought that they, too, for the first time appreciated Shakespeare properly. Moreover, in her interesting story of Shakespeare among the uncultivated masses—on the frontier, among the Indians, in the Gold Rush, on the showboats—she recognizes an outlook generally analogous to that of Shakespeare's audience. In the farces and trapeze acts that frequently shared the evening with early American Shakespearean performances, she rightly sees a parallel to the jig on Shakespeare's stage. It is here, she hints, that the real Elizabethan approach to Shakespeare has indeed been recreated in America. Yet here the audience did not come prepared to view the plays through the dark glasses of the Elizabethan mind.

In Mr. Van Doren's reading of Shakespeare the most constant and substantial point of reference is the plays themselves. In his SHAKESPEARE one poet answers to another across the centuries, testifying to the enduring life of poetry itself and particularly of the dramatic poetry through which Shakespeare's characters have their being. Here is justified what in Mr. Draper's book is repudiated: Shakespeare's own faith that "Not marble, nor the gilded monuments of princes, shall outlive this powerful rime." Aware, of course, that Elizabethan idioms, both linguistic and cultural, profit by and occasionally demand historical exposition, Mr. Van Doren at the same time makes it clear that the comprehension of the great poetry of the plays is not generally dependent upon Elizabethan erudition and that the plays are entitled to our attention for poetic rather than for philological or docu-

mentary reasons. He insists, in opposition to the neo-Elizabethans, that Shakespeare "is typical of any world that can be understood" and therefore can be judged by our most general standards: "The 'Poetics' of Aristotle will explain him more readily than the unique literature of his age will explain him. It is difficult for such literature to explain itself; nor does Shakespeare seem to call for explanations beyond those which a whole heart and a free mind can supply." "Angels are bright still, though the brightest fell" does not, for all our theological indifference and ignorance, greatly expand in significance and meaning from an extensive excursion into Elizabethan theories of the supernatural.

Assuming that as a dramatic poet Shakespeare's chief claim to greatness must rest in the capacity of his poetic style for communication, Mr. Van Doren takes for his chief aim the clarification of his poetic devices and method as a means of deepening our understanding of his art. With a remarkable evenness of perception through all the plays he makes us conscious of its simplicity and yet of its rich stores of revelation. Thus he leads us to a greater awareness of the immense world peculiar to *ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA* by instructing us in the special style which Shakespeare has provided to create it. Style itself is seen to be the creative agent, as it were, through which the play has its very being. Hotspur lives anew in Mr. Van Doren's exposition of how he talks himself alive in brilliant and individualized poetry; Falstaff's idiom becomes the more personal for the inquiry into his 'private voice' and his rôle as 'comic actor'; and Othello's nature seems the richer and more exotic for the exploration of the "dark music of his own voice". *OTHELLO* as a play may, as Mr. Draper has maintained, have derived many details from Elizabethan army life, but to interpret the play as he does, primarily in terms of the Elizabethan military code, is to reject the embracing imagination of Shakespeare for the rigid and commonplace mentality of his lesser contemporaries. Mr. Van Doren, trusting in the constancy of Shakespeare's poetry, is not on less tenable grounds in finding in *OTHELLO* human beings rather than merely military men engaged in a perennial, tragic conflict rather than in a tragedy of manners.

Occasionally, to be sure, in following Mr. Van Doren's skillful inquiry into Shakespeare's created worlds, one is suddenly aware that the author's own art has in a sense intervened between the reader and the art which the book seeks to elucidate. One sees that an essentially poetic mode as opposed to the critical mode (in so far as the two can be opposed) is partially at work on the poems and plays. The method in varying degrees becomes suggestive, subjective, and contextual; and hence it is anathema to those who insist that all evaluation of Shakespeare shall be in terms that are inflexible, precise, and sharp in denotation, free from emotional shadings and connotations. But Mr. Van Doren's method is merely an admission that the plays now exist as entities, that they are experiences and objects and as such may profit by the illumination of the poetic, may legitimately have whatever enlargement of consciousness the creative imagination may contribute. Mr. Van Doren is aware that "Criticism grows desperate from time to time and denies their [the plays'] existence" as worlds. Accordingly, as between the reality of the created life of the plays and that of the Elizabethan Shakespeare, he accepts the former. Hence he renounces such historical assurances as those of Mr. Draper as largely irrelevant, and finding in the plays not merely a confluence of historical attitudes but rather Nature clearly mirrored, he can deal in paradox: he can see that in *As You Like It* "The pastoral sentiment is without a leg to stand on, yet it stands"; that *Touchstone* "is without illusion; so much so that he will not claim he can do without it". Hence, too, he chooses to speak of tragic cause in *OTHELLO* in terms that Aristotle would have understood; and Iago he knows not as the wronged ancient whose psychology is chiefly explicable in terms of Elizabethan army life, but as the absolute and everlasting cynic who happened to be an Elizabethan ancient.

Although he may be arrogantly dismissed by some as an aesthetic or impressionistic critic, Mr. Van Doren must be modestly placed within the great stream of Shakespearean criticism, among those critics whose insight into the dramatist has given them life beyond the ephemeral critical fashion or school whose limitations they may have in some measure reflected. He confesses that his "favorite among the older critics is Dr. Johnson", but he also acknowledges his obligations to so varied a field as G. Wilson Knight,

E. E. Stoll, Caroline Spurgeon, and J. Dover Wilson. But he has also fundamentally allied himself with the Romantics, whom he does not so readily acknowledge; for with them he can praise Shakespeare in almost absolute terms and consider his characters as creatures so fully conceived as to have lives in their own right. For instance, there is *As You Like It*, where "Shakespeare's understanding of his subject is exhausted, until there is no more to understand . . . and the exact like of it . . . has never been seen in literature again." Or there is *Hamlet*: "We can no more understand him than we can doubt him. He is an enigma because he is real. We do not know why he was created or what he means. We simply and amply perceive that he exists." To Mr. Draper such words must seem extravagant and blind indeed. For over against this *Hamlet* who is "the plexus of so much humanity" and "a genius of unfathomable depth" Mr. Draper has set his little military prince, safely caged in his Elizabethanism—tamed, tagged, and pretty nearly meaningless.

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### A GLIMPSE OF THE FUTURE

FIVE YOUNG AMERICAN POETS. Mary Barnard, Randall Jarrell, John Berryman, W. R. Moses, George Marion O'Donnell. Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions, 1940. \$2.50.

One of the weekly reviewers has objected to the sameness of these five groups of poems, complaining that "the reader passes from one to the other without much sense of change, except in externals." Does this comment mean that poems have some entity that exists independent of their "externals", that there is a real separation of form and content apart from the separation we make for the convenience of criticism? Take away the externals and something will remain on the white paper? Does the comment imply that, compared with the something, the externals are of trifling importance? Is it based on the notion that in a fertile age of poetry the writers are vastly heterogeneous?

The last particularly is *A Question To Be Asked*, in the light of the speculations that Randall Jarrell makes in his preface.

(Each of the five poets contributes—besides about forty pages of verse, a photograph, and a facsimile—a “Note on Poetry”.) Jarrell represents the modernist poets, Pound, Eliot, Crane, and their like, as “the end-products of romanticism, all past and no future”; and he predicts a poetry of the future that will be “a departure from modernist romanticism”. The discussion compels him to use those handy terms, “Elizabethan poetry”, “metaphysical”, “neo-classical”, *et alia*; terms that may be used at all only because the poets in every age have a small number of themes that each treats according to his peculiar externals. How much sense of change does the reader get in passing from “The Shepherd’s Calendar” to “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love” . . . except in externals? How much from Donne’s “Anniversary” to Marvell’s “Coy Mistress” to Herrick’s “Corinna” and “To The Virgins”?

But perhaps the reviewer does not mean to be understood this way, for he later tells us that he was “impressed by the interests and competence of their writing, though not by its individuality.” Set beside either his first remark or what we know of the past, this statement is equally puzzling. If poems have individuality they get it from their externals, since the style is the man; that is, the poet distinct from other poets. In order to understand this observation, we have to imagine five poets who are competent, though not competent to form their styles, and interesting, though not very different from the hundred thousand other writers of this country. We have to be able, furthermore, to “pass from” Dryden’s “Absalom and Achitophel” to Pope’s “Atticus”—for example—and, forgetting all that is similar in the styles, notice only what is distinct.

The reviewer is worth chiding because of one’s hopes for the future, because such desperate attempts at criticism will not aid writers who, like these Five Young American Poets, are publishing their first volumes. Although, as Jarrell says, the impulse of what we now call “modernist poetry” has pretty much spent itself, its achievement remains an achievement because the poets were able to agree on what was lacking from the poetry of the past, and on what measures had to be taken in order to fill that lack. Among the most interesting poems in this volume, the work of Berryman, Jarrell, and O’Donnell, there are points of

similarity, no less than there are between those of Donne and Marvell, Dryden and Pope, Eliot and Tate. Nothing is here for tears. Jarrell refuses to say he has written the kind of poetry that will replace modernism, but no-one looking into the future can despair when these writers have reached only their first volumes.

FIVE YOUNG AMERICAN POETS has time also for a backward glance. In 1915 the Imagists, to whom Mary Barnard has been rightly compared, produced their Manifesto and announced that they intended to sharpen the poet's vision so that he could once more write with his eye on the object. The announcement did not compel them to write free verse, nor to exclude ideas and even human situations from their poems, yet these traits appeared so often as to have become by now the hall-marks of Imagist verse. It is Physical Poetry, concerned only with describing *things*, and it usually lacks rhyme and metre. A poem of this kind need not be amorphous, as a good Imagist poem—for instance, some of Wallace Stevens's—proves; but the lines must be poetically logical, and there must be an interesting relationship among the larger parts of the poem.

All but one of Miss Barnard's are free, and "My approach to almost any experience is", she tells us in her Note, "through a . . . landscape." Many of her poems begin this way: "When a hill stream enters a river at flood", or "Mossy stones, the quilted legends", or "Not in the forest with its air of childhood." When man is her proper study, she appears to be writing about her own, Miss Barnard's feelings, rather than the feelings of the writer. If a poet shows the ability to manage tone delicately, to use a vocabulary that describes freshly and exactly without the waste of a word, and to keep emotion within the bounds of poise, why should the poems nevertheless seem to have been left over from an earlier literary movement? It may be that the approach-through-landscape is not accessible at this particular moment, or it may be that the form has failed.

To examine "Chanson Pathétique", Miss Barnard's only attempt at stanzas and rhyme, may be helpful. It describes, in her careful, sympathetic manner, the suffering of an unrequited lover; and so ends,

My heart's under your staircase  
 In a tea canister.  
 Pray step lightly on that place  
 Or slide down the bannister.

The witty ending does not come off entirely, for *tea canister* suggests too strongly that it merely raised its hand when the stanza called for volunteers that would rhyme with *bannister*; but what differentiates this "Chanson" from all the rest is that it is the only one in which Miss Barnard attempts a shift of tone, or—put it another way—in which she regards the situation with more than one attitude. Too often her ability to manage tone is just an ability to maintain one tone. When her feelings broaden to include the more exciting multiple point of view, they demand a fixed form as a frame. "Chanson Pathetique" is not an Imagist poem, and it is of this group the most nearly memorable. We should not expect her poems to have much in common with those of W. R. Moses, who contributes thirty-six to the volume. According to his Note, most free verse is to him "very uninteresting"; he is preoccupied with poetry in its formal aspects. Certainly his practice displays that "mechanical ease" that he says he has gradually found—if by that he means he can produce a copious number of regular stanzas into which his ideas and images have seemingly flowed without effort or strain.

Some of the titles, such as "The Problem of Evil", promise a generous helping of the intellect in the poems; but most of them hold only splashes of sunlit scenery . . .

Hellenic Ones and German categories  
 Show less clearly than red leaves on the hills.

The poems reveal few other choices, either of intellect or imagination. It is impossible to feel there is an individual projected into this style; and nosing for mere biography can turn up little beyond Moses's fondness for hunting and his mild disturbance at the successes of the Nazis. What does a man

Hate more than death and mortal strife?

inquires a poem answering "Nothing". On the contrary, many poems have embraced these as two of the most fertile subjects. To turn from them to the "limpid greenish lake" is to court, if not disaster, at any rate that all-pervasive *mildness* which creeps at the reader from these verses. It is at least allowable to guess that the

limp regularity of the lines reflects the lack of "mortal strife" in the writer's sensibility. Evidently there has been little striving to concentrate by means of metaphor, to underscore by a change of cadence, or to thrust home by climax. After a while the stanzas, in most of the poems, leave off. Scarcely an accent is out of place. At random, the beginning of Moses's last (and probably latest) poem; on the fall of Paris:

This is a time to concentrate our thought  
On all the myths of change-compelling light,  
From Jewish tales of how their God made bright . . .

But you must let the undulations of it lap you for forty pages, to be completely soothed.

Let us say guardedly that such an effect is not the function of poetry in our time. John Berryman displays great variety of subject-matter in his *Twenty Poems*, yet in each he is aware of, if not directly concerned with, the world he so successfully renders into the "Letter to His Brother".

the violent world our fathers bought,  
For which we pay with fantasy at dawn,  
Dismay at noon, fatigue, horror by night.

This world is best approached indirectly, implicitly, as it is for example in his two poems with Biblical backgrounds, "The Disciple" and "The Trial".

We saw him with a delicate length of string  
Hide coins and bring a paper through a flame.  
I was amazed by what that man could do.

Thus does "The Disciple" ironically equate the crowds of the modern world with those that figure in the New Testament. "The Trial" uses the imagery of the Book of Job to suggest that, faced with Job's problem, we are denied even such an unassuaging answer as was given to him. (It is to be hoped that Mr. MacLeish's new-found officialdom will never become powerful enough to unleash the Gestapo on "The Trial" and its author for describing how

Prosperous generations, scythe in hand,  
Mapped the continents, murdered, built latrines.)

When Berryman attacks the world directly and topically, he is less good. "Nineteen Thirty-Eight" and "World-Telegram" barely escape being merely didactic; and their style seems alter-

nately too solemn and too comic for the matter. Yet one of the virtues and the promises of Berryman's style is that it can absorb and use the ordinary elements of city life, as it does in "The Statue", "On The London Train", and "Parting as Descent". Even better than these poems are the grave, rather melancholy meditations on a particular situation ("Conversation" and "Night and the City") or simply on a painting by Breughel ("Winter Landscape").

O'Donnell's poems display a splendor of imagery that Berryman's do not attempt, but sometimes at the cost of a too highly wrought diction. "Prayer against the Furies", for which O'Donnell's collection is named, is a striking poem, as a sample will show:

When sunlight chips sharp edges in the dawn:  
The weathered barns, the six pines on the ridge,  
The ragged fence that lattices the sky,  
Come outlined sharply as the marble edge  
After the sculptor's first definitive stroke.

Yet what is added by the words *sharp*, *sharply*, and *definitive*? If some of the simple descriptive passages are objectionable in this way, the style is better for such subjects as death ("they have surrendered Even the taste of dust, salt to their tongues", from the same poem); and since much of O'Donnell's writing besides this breathes his interest in the Confederates, he often achieves success on the theme of mortality. In "Mirrored Dead", for instance, the "violent shroudless dead" are played off against Martin Anding with "The red clay blanket wound about his head."

Perhaps for the same reason one hopes for more of the condensed, violent narratives that are scattered through the collection. "Death's Photography" and "The Hound That Hunts No More" render narrative moments of great intensity; the haunting "John Sterling" is one modern ballad that does not suffer when compared with its predecessors. And finally, in "Mask of Christ" O'Donnell has found a subject to which his style is perfectly suited. The symbol enables him to deal directly yet not flatly with the contemporary predicament:

Instruct us in rigidity of forms,  
Firmness of mouth and fixity of eyes,  
Lest we be lured to pity . . .

As an instance of the likeness and unlikeness of these three

poets, Jarrell writes no narratives and deals often with the modern predicament which he sometimes approaches historically. In these twenty poems, *The Rage for the Lost Penny*, there are reminiscences of various modern poets; harmless echoes that need be mentioned at all only because they illuminate his preface. The preface is largely concerned with the position of the emerging poet among the poets already established. Jarrell believes that the work of such writers as Eliot and Tate is finished, but that Auden is finding a way out of the cul-de-sac. Wherefore it is interesting to find both strains in his own verse. In "1789-1939", for instance, the abstraction, modern man, is strikingly personified as a "monstrous child" who

Climbs to the long roll of the drums,  
Wearying, wearying, lifts his huge head  
To see with helpless and darkening eyes  
The tyrant standing among his torturers.

The background of this poem probably contains Tate's "Man, dull critter of enormous head" (and possibly Eliot's "Weeping, weeping multitudes"?). Again, "A Description of Some Confederate Soldiers", one of Jarrell's most tense and concentrated poems, seems to connect with at least two of Tate's: the soldiers are

The barbarous foliage of an age  
Necessity instructed and destroyed.  
There is no hesitation in those eyes—

just as Tate's "demons" are "hurried beyond decision." (See also REACTIONARY ESSAYS and REASON IN MADNESS, passim.)

On the other hand, Jarrell is equally good when he sounds like Auden, when for example he writes of

the crazy love  
That spoke the one word to the foolish head  
That that poor egg could bear and still not break.

The advantage of this style is its tone of familiarity; it saves this poem, "Eine Kleine Nachtmusik", from the tonelessness that blights many of the others. Less fortunately, it often entails the peculiar sort of Audenesque simile that only renders an attitude. In Auden's hands these can be most effective, as with "Kept tears like dirty postcards in a drawer" ("A. E. Housman") or "Against the net of the ribs the heart flails like a salmon" ("A Love-Letter"); but there is not enough reason for "A sensibility brutal

as a thumb" and "you owned me like a chair", in Jarrell's poems just discussed. These are dangerously facile because they are not made to work hard enough. But the main point is that Auden's successors are able to participate in his technique: he is, as Jarrell says a little disingenuously, "[almost] the only poet who has been influential very recently."

Some of the poems in *The Rage for the Lost Penny* deal with the plight of modern Man, some with that of a modern man (stated thus generally, these are probably the only themes available to modern poets.) If the ability to treat the present European darkness directly and poetically were the only measure of success, these poems would be the best in the volume. Of such are "The Automaton", "The Machine-Gun", "For the Madrid Road", "The Refugees", and parts of "The Winter's Tale", in spite of its diffuseness. But since—needless to say—there are other measures, "A Story" and "On the Railway Platform" deserve to be placed beside these. For Jarrell's rather spare diction the form of "A Story" and "The Refugees" is particularly effective: the same six words end the lines of each stanza, each time in a different order (a little like Ransom's "Address to The Scholars of New England".) The increased emotional concentration is noticeable, and one would not be far wrong in placing "A Story" and "The Refugees" at the top of the list.

This spareness in the diction, or tonelessness, is the result partly of Jarrell's fondness for a handful of nouns that he employs in nearly every poem: to wit, *blood*, *stranger*, (the collection was originally called *Blood for a Stranger*—Auden, again?) *mask*, *virus*, and sometimes *sleep*. But the strangers from whom the travelers take their unmeant kisses in "On the Railway Platform" are not the same as the "You stranger, you damned stranger!" of "For an Emigrant". The combination is confusing, and suggests that these words have larger references for the writer than they can possibly have for the reader. At the same time, it must be said that this is an obscurity which the accumulation of the writer's poems in the future will gradually remove.

It is these three groups of poems, these that grapple with our present and our future, that this review has attempted to stress,—at the expense of Miss Barnard and W. R. Moses. These two the reviewer mentioned at the beginning should have treated in

more detail; for, despite the poise of her lines and his metrical facility, their verse suggests sensibility in excess of the form designed to contain it. To discussing this, that reviewer's odd notions about form would have been no barrier. But when faced with poems of such merit as "Winter Landscape" or "Mask of Christ" or "A Story", THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW would for the welfare of the future do better to relegate the publication to the Books Received page and let it go at that.

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### ALL PASSION SPENT

PARADISE LOST, by Grant McColley. Chicago: Packard & Co. 1940. 362 plus xi pages. \$2.50.

If George W. Whiting considers it heresy to say that Milton followed one source and then another in writing *PARADISE LOST*, he is perhaps influenced by the romantic notion that poets are more or less amanuenses for the Divine Spark; that their poetry springs full-panoplied from their heads at the behest of a Higher Power. Perhaps also Mr. Whiting is influenced by the notion that many people seem to have: that because Milton wrote about God, he was especially inspired by God.

John Milton, however, did not belong to Mr. Whiting's church. At the age of nineteen he says that

I have some naked thoughts that rove about  
And loudly knock to have their passage out;  
And weary of their place do only stay  
Till thou (native Language) hast deck't them in thy best array.

He goes on to observe that he wants to write about what he eventually did write about; and he implies that the task before him is not to await inspiration, but to gather materials to work with.

In his latest book, *PARADISE LOST*, Grant McColley shows pretty clearly how much Milton owed to certain sources. He observes, in passing, that people don't seem to mind finding out that

Shakespeare used raw material to create his poetry, or that other poets did the same. Of Milton, however, it becomes "heretical" to observe that he, too, was a workman who had to use materials to build his masterpieces; because, perhaps, he was a Puritan, or because he was Cromwell's secretary, or because he wrote about God, or because of some other reason. Mr. McColley shows that not only did Milton use literary source material but he even did it quite openly, and apparently without any idea that he was a heretic. According to Verity, Warton pointed out how closely Milton followed one source, Gerard's *Herball*, and followed it verbally. Others have observed from time to time how much Milton owes to DuBartas, Vondel, Grotius, and others; but Mr. McColley has got down to it quite systematically and shown that Milton took passage after passage from various writers in the hexameral tradition, and used such passages literally as his material.

Mr. McColley shows further that the whole scheme of *PARADISE LOST* in its major episodes and in its minor episodes is in the hexameral tradition. The characters and their actions, to some extent the underlying philosophy, and to some extent even the words, are clearly taken from the hexameral writers. Against such a show of chapter and verse, it is useless to reply only "heresy".

Mr. McColley does not go to such extreme and minute demonstration as did John Livingston Lowes in *THE ROAD TO XANADU*, but his method is somewhat the same. Neither does he go to such regrettable extremes as did Mutschmann in showing Milton's possible debt to Hakluyt, Camden, and others.

Lowes, Mutschmann, and others have employed the method used by Mr. McColley with considerable success, and it is therefore pleasing to record that Mr. McColley has developed a very satisfactory thesis. He has shown clearly enough that Milton, like any other poet, built his poetry out of raw materials; but he has shown much more.

Dryden, Pope, and most other critics of Milton, have observed that Milton's materials are all literary. V. P. Squires pointed out some forty-seven years ago that Milton's knowledge of nature, far from being what Landor said it was, was entirely the result of reading. Mr. McColley bolsters the thesis of Squires consider-

ably, and makes it even harder for students of Milton to belong to Mr. Whiting's congregation.

More perhaps than any one has suspected, Milton followed the hexameral writers in general and in detail when he wrote *PARADISE LOST*. For his detailed demonstration of that fact, Mr. McColley deserves all credit. He deserves credit, likewise, for demonstrating a peculiarity in Milton that may interest psychological investigators: namely, that when Milton remembered and reworked long passages from, for instance, *DuBartas*, he inverted them, starting with the last detail of his source and working on backwards toward the first.

When Mr. McColley interprets his material, he may be questioned. He seems, for instance, to regard Milton as much more an orthodox Christian than his works warrant. His dating of *PARADISE LOST* agrees with the dating of others in considering Book IV and Books I and II as composed early. An investigation based on style, however, discloses that while Book IV is probably the earliest in composition, Book IX is also one of the early books; whereas Book III seems to belong to a later period of philosophical rather than emotional poetry.

If Mr. McColley had considered not *PARADISE LOST* alone, but *PARADISE LOST* as the first of Milton's three great poems, he might have found less orthodoxy. Milton obviously was writing about man as man; he took humanity as his subject. What he had to say about humanity, however, was not what the orthodox Christian had to say, any more than it was what the Stoic had to say.

Milton was admittedly a man of very powerful passions, which he kept rigorously in check. Whether, as some critics believe, he kept his passions in check because of physical inability to give them rein without dire consequences, or whether his austere intellect forbade his enjoying his passions and emotions, is beside the point. No one could write of the good things of life and the forms of sin attractive to most of us, and make them sound so delightful, unless he himself appreciated them. No one could portray such a character as Satan unless he knew what a passionate nature suffers.

The character of Satan is probably a personification of Milton's attitude toward passion: brilliant, overwhelming, able to make

any course desired seem the best course. At the same time, Milton felt that the end of unchecked passion is a mere groveling in the dust. The man who lives the passionate life is the man who is overwhelmed by his own nature.

There is a certain amount of Christian orthodoxy in this idea; but there is less in *PARADISE REGAINED*. Here Christ is not the Saviour who sacrifices himself for the sins of mankind: he is rather the rational man, the man who follows the dictates of reason and is able to put aside passion at will. This is no Christian Christ: it is the ideal of what is sometimes known as "the Great Tradition". And it can be said that this exemplar of Milton's shares at least one characteristic with the exemplars of Swift: like the Houyhnhnms, Milton's Christ is dull. No one reading the last voyage of Gulliver or *PARADISE REGAINED* would think that the merely rational man had got anything that any one else would want. (Incidentally, and in spite of contrary interpretations, Swift seems to have felt that way, too).

We are not at the end of Milton's thought, however, any more than we are at the end of his projected literary trio. Having got the long epic and the short epic off his hands, having shown the results of passion, and the results of rationality, Milton, with much more understanding of humanity than we usually give him credit for, turned to man as a human being. In *SAMSON AGONISTES* he shows us Samson, a man overwhelmed by his own passionate nature, as Milton could have been overwhelmed by his; a man whose reason let him see the result of his unreasonable passion; but a man who had not given up his human dignity in the face of disaster. Samson is not only Milton; he is any human being who has done those things which he ought not to have done and left undone those things which he ought to have done.

Milton had made it pretty clear in *PARADISE LOST* and *PARADISE REGAINED* that there is no salvation in either passion alone or reason alone. He had explored thoroughly every philosophical and ethical approach to his problem. He had investigated every offering in the way of salvation for the tormented human being. None of them was of personal value to John Milton.

What then remains? Only the faith that since man is not able to comprehend the universe, what seems to the individual irrepar-

able disaster may be, *sub specie aeternitatis*, not disastrous after all.

But this faith is hardly Christian. It is an admission that man cannot understand God—and God may be what you will, whether a personal creator or simply the physical universe. Very few orthodox Christians are modest enough to admit that they are not more or less in rapport with God. Milton, confessing that he did not know, and confessing at the same time that he did not doubt, apparently found for himself release from tormenting thoughts. The last lines of SAMSON, summing up his philosophy, are a pretty refutation to the interpretation that Milton was an orthodox Christian.

The question remains, of course: why did Milton take the Christian theology and the Christian cosmogony for his story? The answer to that is probably not too difficult: there is no other material which offers what Milton needed to work with: the story of mankind as the victim of passion, to whom reason may bring salvation, but for whom, after all, the salvation of reason is of dubious value. Nowhere else, as in the story of the fall and the redemption, could Milton find such material for his work; and since he found that material pretty much as he wanted it, he had no occasion to improvise. All he had to do was to work a miracle, and that is what he did.

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### STUDY IN OBTUSENESS

CHRONOLOGY OF FAILURE. By Hamilton Fish Armstrong. New York: Macmillan. 1940. \$1.50.

In his latest book Mr. Hamilton Fish Armstrong expands his chronology, *THE DOWNFALL OF FRANCE*, which appeared in the October 1940 issue of *FOREIGN AFFAIRS*, of which he is editor. The additional material includes a preliminary chapter on the setting for the German attack and two chapters at the end on "Why did France Fall?" and "What Are the Lessons For Us?"

For both, the carefully compiled chronology and the appended reflections (which cautiously avoid any suggestion of overstatement) American readers have reason to be grateful—in particular those readers who have waded through many of the “inside” stories of the collapse of France.

The day-by-day account of France’s fall is noteworthy for the fullness of its detail; for the care with which attention is called to items about which the full truth is not yet known, and to events of which there are two equally plausible interpretations; and especially for the focusing of the reader’s attention on the contrast between the *actual* sequence of *events* and the sequence of *communiqués* issued when the events were occurring.

Mr. Armstrong explains the French failure as due to (1) lack of coördination between foreign policy and military policy, (2) insufficient matériel, particularly airplanes and tanks, to repel a German attempt to turn the Maginot Line through the Netherlands and Belgium, (3) political and social division, (4) the “Maginot Line in the mind”, (5) the superior resources, organization, and striking power of the German Army. “To some extent, too, French military errors can perhaps be traced to the fact that many older officers at the top were jealous of the younger men and automatically mistrusted the tactics which they favored. At least one eminent French chieftain disliked the whole idea of a mechanized army because, he said, mechanics are sure to be radicals.” Though cautiously avoiding the facile identification of a fascist-minded Frenchman as pro-German, and in particular emphasizing the loyalty to France *qua* France of many royalists including the Duc de Guise, Mr. Armstrong by implication emphasizes the fact that the division in France between revolutionaries and counter-revolutionaries of 1789 was far deeper than, for instance, the division between left and right in England.

Looking back over the past eight years, Mr. Armstrong can well afford to say, “I told you so”. In July 1933 he published *HITLER’S REICH: THE FIRST PHASE*. In this and in *EUROPE BETWEEN WARS?* (1934) he recognized what Neville Henderson has not yet discovered, that “so far as foreign policy goes, there is not an atom of difference between the immediate aims of the radicals and the ultimate aims of the reactionaries” among the Nazis; that “the goal is the same, whichever has his hand on the wheel; the

only difference is in the timing of the signal for full speed ahead." In *EUROPE BETWEEN WARS?* he suggested that France could pursue (1) a policy of intransigence or (2) a policy of appeasement or (3) a policy of appeasement for a time and then resistance too late. He can now point with satisfaction to his prediction that the third course definitely meant war, "with the upshot in doubt". The failure of France was a failure of imagination and of will, on the part of both leaders and people. There was no Clemenceau to scourge the people until they knew that German rearmament menaced the French patrimony, no Poincaré to use the British pledge of assistance of September 26, 1938 "to line up behind Britain, France, and Russia so solid a coalition of powers from the Baltic to the Aegean as would have thrown Mussolini back into neutrality and called Hitler's bluff." Responsible French statesmen may excuse themselves on the ground that "even if they had themselves grasped the truth and told it they would not have been believed either. But peace-loving as the French people were, and unpalatable as the truth about Germany would have been, the attempt to rouse them should have been made. It was not made, except by M. Paul Reynaud; and when he was given the right to turn his warnings into acts it was, we now see, too late."

Elizabeth Monroe, reviewing three books on the Munich Agreement in the *FORTNIGHTLY* of May 1939, found Mr. Armstrong's *WHEN THERE IS NO PEACE* the least valuable of the three because of his initial postulate that "it is not for an American to discuss the moral issue". Miss Monroe found his survey incomplete because "unless you take morals into account, you cannot discuss Munich. You can record events, but you cannot help being arid in the eyes of English readers." This reviewer's reaction to Mr. Armstrong's work is just the reverse. Mr. Armstrong's book is more satisfying precisely because it was not, like some others, written "in a white heat of anger." Mr. Armstrong is content to provide light rather than heat. He apologetically suggests that this time "an American may, I hope, attempt to answer the question 'Why did France fall?' without seeming to criticize for the sake of criticizing. . . . If we on this side of the Atlantic search out the reason for the French disaster it is because we know we share in its results and because we wish in our own interest to

learn the lessons if we can." So much the more impressive is Mr. Armstrong's repetition of the warning of *We or They*? We can choose to maintain our heritage of freedom or we can accept the dominance and the ideas, morals, economy, culture, and religion of Nazi Germany. But we cannot do part of one and part of the other. "Let us, unlike France, have the power of imagination to discern the possible destinies that await us. Let us, unlike France, have the power of will to embrace the destiny that we choose, bravely, confidently, and in time".

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### WHERE LADDERS START

LAST POEMS AND PLAYS: By William Butler Yeats. New York. The Macmillan Company. 1940. Pp. 126. \$1.75.

"And as I look backward upon my own writing, I take pleasure alone in those verses where it seems to me I have found something hard and cold, some articulation of the Image, which is the opposite of all that I am in my daily life, and all that my country is."

That sentence from Yeats's AUTOBIOGRAPHY gives a clue to the startling quality of his later poetry. This stress on the antithesis between the Will that desires and the Image, the thing desired, this search for the "hard and cold" rendering of experience, pervades these LAST POEMS AND PLAYS. For in his last years the poet's imagination lived not in an ivory tower of escape or tranquillity but often with "blood and mire", with "lust and rage". "What else have I to spur me into song?" Tempted by quiet, he prays for "an old man's frenzy" like that of Timon or Lear, William Blake, or Michael Angelo. Seeking a theme, he recalls, in "The Circus Animals' Desertion", the masterful images of his dream-enchanted early poetry: Oisin, Countess Cathleen, Cuchu-

lain; then, turning back to the roots of experience, he ends with one of the most shattering images in modern poetry:

Now that my ladder's gone,  
I lie down where all the ladders start,  
In the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart.

The poems touch the gamut from anguish to a deep joy; from violence to "the spiritual intellect's great work". Several of Yeats's familiar themes and symbols are here: memories of Synge and Lady Gregory; praise of "the noble and the beggar-man" as the true source of Irish poetry; Ireland and Parnell; the gyres of history, the eagle on the wing. Although there is no poem here that can match in intensity or music or magic some of the lyrics in *THE TOWER*, *THE WINDING STAIR*, and the last plays, yet even the slightest has some touch, usually in the refrain, of the genius of Yeats. The two plays add little or nothing to his stature: *PURGATORY* conveys a spiritual tragedy in a brutal story; *THE DEATH OF CUCHULAIN* combines enigmatically hero and street-singer, Irish myth and modern references. But the book is shot through with the extraordinary vitality of this "old man's eagle mind". Reading these last words of Yeats at a moment when Ireland is threatened with new danger, when "Irrational Streams of blood are staining earth", one is lifted for a little above the horror by a great poet's fearless vision of death and of renewal.

F. W. K.

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### OMNIBUS AS TRIBUTE

ESSAYS IN MODERN ENGLISH HISTORY IN HONOR OF WILBUR CORTEZ ABBOTT.  
Harvard University Press. 1941. Pp. 404.

On the occasion of the retirement from college work and from lecturing of some inspiring and beloved professor, it has been frequently the custom in recent years for his former students and disciples to publish a volume of essays in his honor. So with the volume before us: it is a tribute written by former pupils and dedicated to that distinguished writer and teacher of English history, Wilbur Cortez Abbott.

As a rule, however, such essays, particularly those in the field

of history, such as the present ones, lack interest. This is due to the fact that these writings are in reality rarely essays in form, style or literary value. They are, in truth, little dissertations or monographs, gleanings from some field of research in which the author is engaged, and through which he hopes for promotion in the college hierarchy. Some of them are overcrowded with proper names, including those of quite obscure persons; others abound in data, statistical or otherwise of no great value when acquired; and all alike are embellished with a formidable array of references and footnotes.

The twelve "essays" under consideration have no unity nor continuity other than that they are all written about modern England or about the British Empire. In point of time they extend from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century. In point of topography they range from London to Acadia, from Acadia to the thirteen American colonies during the Revolution, and, finally, from these to far-flung Madras and the commercial policies of the East India Company in the eighteenth century.

It is to be regretted that Charles Seymour, probably the most notable of Professor Abbott's pupils and now President of Yale, should have contributed not an essay but only a foreword to the book. In charm of presentation and in style he is easily the superior of his collaborators.

On the whole the essays themselves are rather tedious reading, as might be expected from men who are trained in research work and not in literary craftsmanship. Yet some of the chapters contain matter which is inherently interesting and which is well told. Such is the article by Professor Morgan entitled "Some Side-lights upon the General Election of 1715". Here the interest lies in the abundant illustrations, drawn mostly from the newspapers of that day, of the almost incredible scurrility and, indeed, downright blackguardism displayed by voters, candidates, and mobs alike in eighteenth century elections to Parliament. No one seemed to hesitate to resort to personal violence nor even to assaulting political opponents with deadly weapons.

In another chapter entitled "The Penobscot Expedition" Walter S. Hayward gives a lively account of the naval and military operations conducted by the inhabitants of Maine, Massachusetts and New Hampshire against a British military and naval force

which, in 1779, had seized Castine Peninsula at the head of Penobscot Bay. The causes for the defeat of the New England men in their attack on the British, viz., their lack of discipline, their lack of coöperation and, above all, their lack of any common American patriotism, make suggestive reading for a student of the American Revolution.

Lastly, we may mention Professor Kirby's article on "English Game Law Reform", a little known subject to American readers of history. Nothing can bring home to such with more force than this article the arrogant class distinctions and class privileges enjoyed by the English landholding squirearchy of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

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### INTELLECTUAL RESPONSIBILITY

THE IRRESPONSIBLES. By Archibald MacLeish. New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce. 1940. 34 pp. \$1.00.

Who, in our day, are the irresponsibles? Mr. MacLeish's title is a broad one, and might lead an inquiring author into many fields; but the book itself is restricted. He deals only with the intellectuals, the scholars and the writers; and he deals only with the immediate present. It may be noted, as explanation of this narrowness, that *THE IRRESPONSIBLES* is a brief address printed as a book; and that certain advantages are inherent in the form. Mr. MacLeish narrows his time to the present and to the near, the very near, future; he concentrates directly upon the present position of the intellectual, without attempting to understand why he became irresponsible; he demands quick and responsible action in the real of ideas. If his work loses something of richness and comprehension in its texture, it gains a hard, uncompromising power: it becomes, simply, a pointed question and an equally pointed declaration.

The key question is stated early: "Why'did we, scholars and writers in America in this time, we who had been warned of our

danger not only by explicit threats but by explicit action, why did we not fight this danger while the weapons we used best—the weapons of ideas and words—could still be used against it?" For the present crisis is political and economic and military, but the character of the crisis is cultural: the things done are "its reflections in the mirrors of action". But the significance of the crisis, and the overwhelming danger, is to be found in "the repudiation of the forms" of civilization, in the desire to destroy the forms of culture, and to repudiate the dignity of the individual. The crisis is practical and immediate; but it is also, more dangerously, intellectual. The Fascist and Nazi concepts of life are "a revolt against the common culture of the West . . . the enemy it must destroy, is . . . the rule of moral law, the rule of spiritual authority, the rule of intellectual truth."

Mr. MacLeish, then, sees the intellectual as spectator in a war against himself. He has abnegated because he is no longer a whole man. Instead of the man of letters, we have two men: the scholar, whose country is the past; the writer, whose country is the present. By this division of intellectual responsibility, each can escape from his duty of defending our common culture. The scholar has become objective, detached, dispassionate; he has taken as model the disinterested man of science. The writer has set, instead, the pattern of an equally detached artist, who sees the world "without morality, without care, without judgment". As a result, our ideas are left without defenders, and our heritage is divided, so that there is no one who feels the obligation to make the past useful to the present, or the present understood against the knowledge of the past.

This is the declaration: intellectuals must again become responsible men of letters; they must fight with the weapons of words and ideas against perversions of the mind, against mental treason, against the threatened destruction of the discipline of thought, of reason, and of morality. The intellectual must become a whole man, unless we are to lose our intellectual liberties.

It is a stern yet heartening message. True, Mr. MacLeish neglects important groups and individuals who seem to contradict his words; but I think he is wise to neglect them. For they are not popular or influential; they do not set the mental tone of our

age. Assuredly he grants our dominant writers too high a place as artists, but this is excellent dialectic: it roots the more firmly his major attack upon them. If he over-simplifies, he does so with reason, for he attacks what our time has set, in writing and in scholarship, as ideals. But he presents a declaration; he does not answer his own question. The essential problem of how we are to get back to the concept of the man of letters remains to be solved. One need only look at authors and publishers, at universities and scholars, to see how far we remain from a solution. Yet it is important that the question of intellectual responsibility should have been raised: the answer, I presume, must come from many individuals, soon, or it will not come at all.

A few words about the responsibility of the publisher, in connection with this book: Mr. MacLeish has written an important tract; it deserves wide reading. But the price is out of all proportion to the cost of manufacturing the book, and its circulation will be drastically restricted because of that. The writer and scholar have many temptations to be irresponsible, and Mr. MacLeish, willingly or unwillingly, has not proved himself altogether immune.

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### IS SCIENCE RESPONSIBLE?

THE SOCIAL RELATIONS OF SCIENCE, by J. G. Crowther. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1941. 665 plus xxxii pages. \$3.50.

"Science," says J. G. Crowther, "is the system of behaviour by which man acquires mastery of his environment." We may object to such a definition for two reasons: first, it is too inclusive; and, secondly, it implies on the part of the scientist a restriction to practical performance. Einstein's suggestion gives a much better idea of the nature of scientific activity: "the century-old endeavor to bring together by means of systematic thought the perceptible phenomena of this world into as thoroughgoing an

association as possible".<sup>1</sup> The scientist does not confine himself by any means to acquiring mastery of his environment, although the results of his efforts usually result in further mastery of perceptible phenomena. Furthermore, the work of the scientist changes the environment. How much it does so Mr. Crowther has set forth succinctly in *THE SOCIAL RELATIONS OF SCIENCE*. Beginning with the kindling of fire and stone-age technique in general, he brings his survey of science and society down to the present day.

What Mr. Crowther has to say is of particular importance because by implication he emphasizes what is becoming more and more apparent: that the scientist must not only continue his inquiry, but must also assume the position of guide and teacher to the laity.

It has been emphasized by E. T. Bell, Lancelot Hogben, and others that scientific inquiry divorced from practical everyday life has resulted in sterility. The scientist who has assumed a social superiority has not accomplished what he might accomplish. Societies without applied science, like those based on slavery, never developed like those which did not disdain the efforts of scientists, and in which scientific speculators used their hands in experiment.

The particular branch of science that develops at any time is pretty largely a matter of social necessity. Astronomy developed to meet the demands of navigators; power physics developed to meet the needs of manufacturers; electricity developed to meet the demands of those who needed superior communication, light, and power. Just at present it is easy to adopt the pessimistic belief that since society is determined to commit suicide, scientific activity is directed towards the destruction of mankind.

It is not proper, however, to blame the scientist for the irrationality of man. Man has always been irrational; and the only people who seem to have had any success in circumventing human irrationality are the scientists. The teachers of mankind have so far been unable to keep mankind from making every effort toward self-destruction. As E. T. Bell has pointed out rather humorously, so Mr. Crowther points out by implication: that unless

<sup>1</sup>SCIENCE, PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION. New York: Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion. 1941.

human beings can get a little scientific method into their heads, they will succeed in their age-old effort to exterminate themselves. The best hope of the future lies in following the lead of the scientist. And this, of course, involves the leadership of the scientist.

The scientist will have to get out of any ivory tower he may like to stay in and become more than ever a man among men. He must exert every effort to make his work useful and comprehensible, and to encourage human beings to regard themselves as rational creatures, and to act accordingly. The scientist must, in short, become the teacher and leader if he is to fulfill his duty.

In one comparatively brief volume Mr. Crowther has given an excellent survey of his field. He has produced a book which can be read with profit, and profitably kept for reference. Beyond that, he has made enough suggestions to encourage others to follow in the way that he goes. Not the least of Mr. Crowther's virtues is a readable, easy style which in no way detracts from the erudition of his book. He gives interesting bibliographical references and provides a suitable index.

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SIX SCANDINAVIAN NOVELISTS. By Alrik Gustafson. 367 pp. Princeton University Press. Princeton. 1940. \$3.50.

This timely study by a Scandinavian-American scholar, published for the American Scandinavian Foundation, is full of interest for the general reader. Of these six Scandinavian novelists of the last fifty years, four have been Nobel Prize winners, and three, Selma Lagerlöf, Knut Hamsun, and Sigrid Undset, are among the great figures in European literature. They are here studied in relation to that nineteenth century European movement of naturalism, realism, and social reform to which the criticism of Georg Brandes and the dramas of Ibsen and Björnson belonged. All six novelists reacted more or less consciously against the ideas of these leaders and struck out on new paths: Jonas Lie in a selective, impressionistic realism; Jens Peter Jacobsen in

a sensitive, analytic art; Verner von Heidenstam in stories and lyrics of a lofty nationalism; Selma Lagerlöf in loving re-creation of her native Värmland legends; Knut Hamsun in his epic tale of man at work on the soil; Sigrid Undset in tragic studies of sinning, suffering human beings.

This book is valuable not only in introducing English-speaking readers to the less known yet significant Scandinavian novelists but in illuminating the familiar figures by showing the growth of their art from their early, in some cases, untranslated work. Here and there one might question Dr. Gustafson's judgments. He accepts the false notion of Ibsen as a mere problem playwright held by these younger writers who were in revolt against his mighty influence. On the other hand, he seems to overstate the power of Hamsun's direct and simple prose, although that power may be, as he claims, untranslatable; at any rate, the comparison with Milton is not a happy one. The finest of the studies is the one which traces the development of Sigrid Undset's moral idealism into her later Catholic faith, and the effect of this spiritual pilgrimage on her somber art. *SIX SCANDINAVIAN NOVELISTS* is an important contribution to our understanding of modern Scandinavian literature not only as a part of European thought and art but for its own rich diversity and vitality.

F. W. K.

